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**Irish planters, Atlantic merchants:  
The development of St. Croix, Danish West Indies, 1750 to 1766**

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A Thesis Submitted for the Award of the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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## Contents

Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Abbreviations	vi
Translations	vii
Figures	viii
Introduction	1
<b>1</b> The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community at Montserrat, British Leeward Islands	33
<b>2</b> Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix.	56
<b>3</b> Nicholas Tuite and the Atlantic sugar trade, 1756 to 1763	86
<b>4</b> The Irish West Indian sugar trade, 1756 to 1763	109
<b>5</b> The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven	159
Conclusion	192
Bibliography	201

Dedicated to my mother

Catriona L. Little, M.D.

(1950-2010)

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## Abbreviations

BL	The British Library
CJC	Customs' Journal, Christiansted, 1760.
WBC	Weighbooks, Christiansted.
DK	Danish Chancellery/ <i>Danske Kancelli</i>
DNA	Danish National Archives/ <i>Rigsarkivet</i> , Copenhagen.
GO	Genealogical Office, National Library of Ireland.
GTK-VGR	Chamber of Customs –West India and Guinea revenue office/ <i>Generaltoldkammeret – ældre del Vestindisk-guineisk renteskriverkontor</i>
HCA	High Court of the British Admiralty
JBTP	Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations
KB	The Royal Library, Copenhagen/ <i>Kongelige Bibliotek</i>
LJB	Letterbook of John Baker
MHS	Maryland Historical Society
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
NLI	National Library of Ireland
PROB	Prerogative Court of Canterbury
PRONI	Public Record Office, Northern Ireland
TKUA	German Chancellery's Foreign Division
TNA	The National Archives, London
VGLK	Debt liquidation Commission/ Den Vestindiske Gældslikvidationskommission, St. Croix.

## **Translations**

Throughout this thesis, I have attempted to represent non-English language sources as faithfully as possible. In some cases, I have made direct quotations from documents that were originally written in French or Danish. In such cases, an English translation appears in the text while the original version is included in the footnotes. Generally speaking however, I have paraphrased my understanding of the sentiments expressed by the authors of the source material. Any errors in these translations are mine alone.



## Figures

<b>Figure 1</b>	
Map of the Caribbean Region, c.1760	9
<b>Figure 2</b>	
Map of St. Croix, 1750	21
<b>Figure 3</b>	
Map of St. Croix, 1766	22
<b>Figure 2a</b>	
Sion Hill Plantation, 1750	63
<b>Figure 2b</b>	
Concordia Plantation, 1750	67
<b>Figure 2c</b>	
Richmond Plantation, 1750.	72
<b>Figure 2d</b>	
Plessens' Plantation, 1750	76
<b>Figure 2e</b>	
Signatures of the Quadripartite Concern	79
<b>Figure 4a</b>	
Lawrence Bodkin, slave trader (extract from CJC)	136
<b>Figure 4b</b>	
Map of Monte Cristi, Santo Domingo, c. 1760.	141

<b>Figure 5</b>	
Table of Irish sugar exporters at St. Croix, 1762	163
<b>Figure 5a</b>	
Sion Hill, 1766	166
<b>Figure 5b</b>	
Concordia, 1766	167
<b>Figure 5c</b>	
Richmond, 1766	168
<b>Figure 5d</b>	
Plessen's Plantation, 1766	169
<b>Figure 5e</b>	
Castle Bourke, 1766	170
<b>Figure 5f</b>	
John Irwin and Andrew Irwin	171

## Introduction

The West Indian island of St. Croix became a colony of the Kingdom of Denmark-Norway in 1733.<sup>1</sup> Despite this, it remained undeveloped until the late 1740s when investment in the large-scale production of sugarcane began in earnest. By the end of the Seven Years' War (1756 to 1763), the neutral island of St. Croix had a thriving sugar economy. This thesis examines a group of Irish merchant-planters who migrated to the Danish island from the British Leeward Islands. Although they became neutral subjects of the Danish Crown, they also maintained personal and commercial ties with the British Empire. In this way, they successfully established a number of sugar plantations and also took advantage of the brisk entrepôt trade that developed at St. Croix during this period. This group shipped a good deal of sugar to Denmark, yet it also supplied the besieged French colony of Saint Domingue with British and Irish goods, together with African slaves. In return, Saint Domingue was given an international market for its plantation produce. As we will see, the Irish community at St. Croix took advantage of the complex Atlantic supply chains and commercial networks that linked the island to ports such as London, Cork, New York, Hamburg, Amsterdam, Copenhagen and Bordeaux. By following strategies of efficiency and economy, this trade became highly lucrative and allowed the Irish community to invest in the development and expansion of their Danish sugar plantations. As a result, their commercial activities as neutrals within the Atlantic economy served as the foundation upon which the Crucian sugar industry was established.

### The Danish Atlantic

To date, historical studies of the 'Atlantic world' have taken many forms and have explored diverse themes.<sup>2</sup> However, one thing they all have in common is an approach

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<sup>1</sup> During the eighteenth century the terms 'Denmark' and 'Danish' were used to signify the Danish state in its entirety. This encompassed the kingdoms of Denmark and Norway and the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. It also included the North Atlantic isles, Greenland and Iceland. In addition, this empire encompassed the Danish West Indies and all Danish colonial possessions in Africa and India. This definition was meaningful from a political perspective as all international relations dealt with the state of Denmark as the sum of all its components. Similarly, from a commercial point of view, it would be misleading to refer to Danish trade as that which simply pertained to the kingdom of Denmark and not to the state of Denmark. Accordingly, this study will use the terms Denmark and Danish to refer to the state of Denmark and the 'Crown of Denmark' will refer to the Danish monarchy. Meanwhile, the term 'Kingdom of Denmark' will be used to describe Denmark as a country within the state of Denmark see, Ole Feldbæk, 'Eighteenth-century Danish neutrality: Its diplomacy, economics and law', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 8 (1983), pp. 3-31, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> See, Nicholas Canny and Philip M. Morgan, eds., *The Oxford handbook of the Atlantic world: 1450-1850* (Oxford, 2011); Caroline Williams, ed., *Bridging the early modern Atlantic world: people, products and practices on the move* (London, 2009); John H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven, 2006); Wim Klooster and A. Padula, eds., *The Atlantic World, essays on*

## Introduction

to the study of the Atlantic world region that investigates the inter-connections, similarities and contrasts that existed between various spheres of influence in the early modern period.<sup>3</sup> By applying this approach, it is possible to detect the webs of association that connect apparently unrelated individuals, locations, artefacts and activities. By doing this, we can develop an appreciation of the ways in which those who populated the Atlantic world region adapted to strange surroundings, interacted with new cultures and exploited novel opportunities within fluid and changing environments. Although histories of individual empires and nation states have their merits, it is important to be aware that the people and the commodities that circulated the Atlantic region were not restricted by notions of the nation state. As I will show in this study, imperial boundaries, and the laws that defined them, were relevant to metropolitan administrators alone.<sup>4</sup>

With this in mind, it can be said that the concept of the Danish Atlantic has not been adequately explored by historians. While the relationship between Denmark and its West Indian colonies has been researched in great detail, there have been few studies that consider this empire within its Atlantic setting.<sup>5</sup> As a result of this, the abundant archival material relating to the Danish West Indies has been employed within an imperial framework and tends to reflect the traditional, bilateral relationships that existed between the metropolitan 'core' and the colonial 'periphery'. In this way, we have vast amounts of quantitative data relating to volumes of sugar exports, sizes of ships and the numbers of African slaves who resided at the islands.<sup>6</sup> What is lacking is an awareness of how islands such as St. Croix compared to other islands during its various phases of development, what were the similarities, what were the differences? Similarly, beyond the influence of the Danish Empire, little is known about the other spheres of influence that contributed to the development of St. Croix.

In light of this, I will attempt to place Denmark, and its West Indian colony of St. Croix, within an Atlantic setting as I describe the commercial conditions that dominated the Atlantic sugar trades during the mid-eighteenth century. Although shaped by mercantilist regulations, imperial boundaries were often made porous by the individuals

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*slavery, migration and imagination* (New York, 2005) and Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden, eds., *Colonial identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (Princeton, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> See for example, Nicholas Canny, 'Writing Atlantic History; or, Reconfiguring the history of colonial British America', *The Journal of American History*, 86(1999), pp. 1093-1114, pp. 1110-1.

<sup>4</sup> See studies such as, Wim Klooster, 'Inter-imperial smuggling' in Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault, eds., *Soundings in Atlantic History: latent sources and intellectual currents, 1500-1830* (Cambridge, Mass., 2009), pp. 141-80 and David Hancock, *Oceans of wine: Madeira and the emergence of American trade and taste* (London, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> An exception to this was the conference entitled, 'Denmark and the Black Atlantic', held at the University of Copenhagen, 4 to 6 May 2006.

<sup>6</sup> This is particularly evident in P.P. Sveistrup, *Bidrag til de tidlige Dansk-Vestindiske øers økonomiske historie med særligt henblik paa sukkerproduktion og sukkerhandel* (Copenhagen, 1942).

## Introduction

who operated at the fringes of empire. In this way, I will introduce the Irish mercantile network that operated within and between the European empires.

Having presented the framework upon which I have based my research, I will then set out to explain the way in which this project developed. First, I will describe my initial investigations into the Irish West Indies through the use of British sources. Although my approach was led by an understanding of dynamic Atlantic interactions, the methodology I initially employed was ultimately bounded by an unconscious attachment to imperial structures. In this light, I will describe the evidence that caused me to consider the nature of the Irish Catholic merchant within the overlapping empires and Atlantic worlds of both Britain and Denmark.

In order to outline the significance of this approach, I will first describe Denmark's position within Europe. In particular, I will discuss its relationship with Britain and Britain's enemy, France. Following this, I will describe the extent of the Danish Empire, and the importance it attributed to its neutral carrying trade. This will allow me to continue my description of how this study evolved as I came to approach the Danish sources relating to this topic. Because this study is intra-imperial in nature, I will show the ways in which I employed Danish and British sources concurrently. Finally, I will outline the contents of my chapters, the problems presented by each and the key sources upon which I base my findings.

### **Imperial sugar trades**

Sugar production, and the trades associated with it, dominated the West Indian region throughout the eighteenth century. The strategic importance of this cash crop was recognised by a number of European Empires and on the eve of the Seven Years' War, the French, British, Danish, Dutch and Spanish islands were, to differing degrees, involved in the large-scale production of sugar.<sup>7</sup> It was a highly competitive market and each empire sought to control the production, distribution and sale of its sugar through the use of protectionist regulations that were inspired by mercantilist doctrines. As a result, these systems of commercial control came to dominate the way in which the metropolitan 'hubs' of empire interacted with their respective colonies.

These kinds of regulations governed the colonial trades of the combatants, Britain and France. However, the colonial commerce of neutral Denmark was also regulated in this way. At the heart of colonial trade lay the exchange of metropolitan manufactures for colonial produce and raw materials. A simple construct, this closed system

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<sup>7</sup> McCusker gives a detailed synopsis of the West Indian sugar trades as conducted by each of the European empires, see John J. McCusker, 'The rum trade and the balance of payments of the thirteen continental colonies, 1650-1775', (Ph.D thesis, University of Pittsburg, 1970), pp. 90-361.

## Introduction

represented the foundation for the mercantilist policies pursued by several early modern European states. In essence, it was envisaged that the mother country would serve as the sole market for the raw produce of its colonies. In doing so, it could develop its domestic industries and produce manufactures for which its colonies would, in turn, act as the primary market. This would ensure that the colonies remained dependent on the metropole. As such, there would be no need for the establishment of a colonial manufacturing base and an incentive would remain to maintain supplies of raw materials to the mother country. Meanwhile, the metropole could maintain a favourable balance of trade, both with its colonies and other states. This would increase a state's store of bullion, and thus its overall share of the world's wealth, which was considered to be finite.<sup>8</sup> This ideology was instrumental in the development of commercial systems such as Britain's Navigation Acts. Due to Britain's increasing maritime supremacy however, that empire's laws heavily influenced commercial exchanges throughout the Atlantic world during the mid-eighteenth century.

From a metropolitan point of view, protectionist regulations created the boundaries for commercial empires. Indeed, historians of empire have used these regulations to guide their research and to serve as frameworks upon which to structure their findings. The sugar trades of individual empires have been analysed at length from this perspective.<sup>9</sup> This has led to a series of studies that focus on the ways in which sugar was produced at the colonial peripheries and then distributed to the metropolitan core. Indeed, the 'spoke and wheel' analogy is often used to describe the way in which colonial commerce was entirely dominated by the demands of the metropolitan hub of empire.<sup>10</sup> While the perimeter of the wheel represents the boundaries of empire, the spokes represent the bilateral patterns of trade between the colonies and the metropole. Although this approach explains certain colonial trades, it cannot explain how individual colonies within an empire influenced each other. Nor does it allow us to understand the ways in which individuals within separate empires interacted with each other through multilateral, intra-imperial commercial enterprise.<sup>11</sup>

Recent research has approached the subject from an alternative perspective. Instead of considering the metropole as the hub around which colonial trade circulated, Hancock

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas Mun, *England's treasure by foreign trade or the balance of our foreign trade is the rule of our treasure* (London, 1718).

<sup>9</sup> See for example, Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and slavery: an economic history of the British West Indies, 1623-1775* (Kansas, 1974); Paul Butel, *Histoire des Antilles françaises, XVIIe - XXe siècle* (Paris, 2007); Jens Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien, 1755-1848, Vore Gamle Tropekolonier*, J.O. Brønsted, ed., (8 vols., Copenhagen, 1966), ii.

<sup>10</sup> J. H. Parry, *Trade and dominion: The European overseas empires in the eighteenth century* (London, 1971), p. 51.

<sup>11</sup> See Hancock on this point, David Hancock, 'Self-organized complexity and the emergence of an Atlantic market economy, 1651-1815: The case of Madeira', in P. Coclanis, ed., *The Atlantic economy during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (Charleston, S.C., 2005), pp. 30-71, p. 31.

## Introduction

has argued that certain aspects of the eighteenth century Atlantic world economy were more complex. Indeed, he has identified the Madeira wine trade as one which was coordinated in multiple centres which were long distances from the metropole.<sup>12</sup> In this way, Hancock argues that the artificial regulations imposed by ‘metropolitan mandarins’ did not prevent the development of a decentralised, self-organising and networked Atlantic world economy.<sup>13</sup>

This perspective of the Atlantic world economy has been informed by an approach applied in scientific fields to the study of the self-organising characteristics expressed by adaptive organisms. In themselves, they are ‘the result of complex interactions among smaller-scale elements that operate according to much simpler behavioural rules.’ In effect, Hancock argues that the large commercial systems that dominated the eighteenth century Atlantic were in fact composed of multiple groups of independent merchants, who were characterised by their flexibility and opportunism. In this way, ‘individual decisions within the commercial sector...were more important than government decisions made in imperial capitals.’ In this way, it can be seen how individuals working within these decentralised systems exercised more control over their commercial engagements than has been previously thought.<sup>14</sup>

This concept was initially presented by Hancock as he defined a group of merchants who operated on what were perceived to be the peripheries of the British Empire. Describing them as ‘marginal, opportunistic, global, improving and integrative’, they moved with ease between many spheres of the Atlantic World. These individuals were truly global as they defied political and linguistic boundaries, establishing a geographically disparate, yet cohesive community upon which networks of trade developed.<sup>15</sup>

### **Irish commercial networks**

Kinship and ethnic ties have been identified as the foundations upon which early modern commercial networks were frequently based.<sup>16</sup> While Price has described the Scottish influence on the tobacco trade of the Chesapeake region, Hamilton has shown

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<sup>12</sup> David Hancock, ‘A “revolution in the trade”: wine distribution and the development of the infrastructure of the Atlantic market economy, 1703-1807’, in John J. McCusker and Kenneth Morgan, eds., *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 105-53, p. 107.

<sup>13</sup> Hancock, ‘Self-organized complexity’, p. 31.

<sup>14</sup> Hancock, ‘Self-organized complexity’, p. 31 and Hancock, ‘The triumphs of Mercury; Connection and control in the emerging Atlantic economy’ in B. Bailyn, and P. Denault, eds., *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent structures and intellectual currents, 1500-1830* (London, 2009), pp. 112-40, pp. 116-7.

<sup>15</sup> See David Hancock, *Citizens of the world: London merchants and the integrations of the British Atlantic community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> See for example, K.G. Davies, ‘The origins of the commission system in the West India Trade’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 2 (1952), pp. 89-107, p. 95 and Peter Mathias, ‘Risk, credit and kinship in early modern enterprise’, in John J. McCusker and Kenneth Morgan, eds., *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, 2000).

## Introduction

the ways in which Caribbean settlers of Scottish origin relied on kinship and ethnicity as they engaged with the Atlantic economy.<sup>17</sup> From an Irish perspective, Cullen has outlined the ways in which Irish commercial groups established themselves within the French and Spanish Empires, while other studies have shown the ways in which Irish merchants operated in Northern Europe during the early modern period.<sup>18</sup>

Cullen's work within this area has traced families of Irish origin to continental Europe where he found them to have integrated into communities in the seaports of France, Spain and Portugal.<sup>19</sup> In his study of the French Brandy trade, Cullen outlines the connections that existed between merchant houses in France and Ireland.<sup>20</sup> Elsewhere, Truxes has established how members of this far-flung Irish mercantile community frequently relied on the city of London. Irrespective of whether these Irish interests were within the British Empire or beyond it, they were supplied with the services they required to conduct business in overseas locations.<sup>21</sup> This trend towards inter-imperial migration and communication is evident in Cullen's descriptions of the connections between Irish mercantile families in France and the French West Indies. In one case, he notes that the Skerrett family moved between the English and the French West Indies, while maintaining commercial and personal contact with Galway and Nantes.<sup>22</sup> In all, these studies suggest that certain aspects of the Irish Atlantic world were, as Hancock suggests, multi-focal, highly networked and decentralised. Moreover, it shows that individuals within it actively sought opportunities to advance their economic status irrespective of where they were located.

### **The search for sources within the British Atlantic**

Accordingly, in this study I set out to establish the extent to which these Irish networks operated within and between the West Indian territories of European empires. The families associated with Galway were particularly associated with the West Indian

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<sup>17</sup> Jacob M. Price, 'Buchanan & Simpson, 1759-1763: A different kind of Glasgow firm trading to the Chesapeake', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 40 (1983), pp. 3-41 and Douglas J. Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic world, 1750-1820* (Manchester, 2005).

<sup>18</sup> See for example, Louis M. Cullen, 'Galway merchants in the outside world, 1650-1800', in D. Ó Cearbhaill, ed., *Galway: town and gown 1484-1984* (Dublin, 1984); Jan Parmentier, 'The Ray dynasty: Irish mercantile empire builders in Ostend, 1690-1790', in Thomas O'Connor and Mary Ann Lyons, eds., *Irish communities in early modern Europe* (Dublin, 2006) and Steve Murdoch, 'Irish entrepreneurs and Sweden in the first half of the eighteenth century', in Thomas O'Connor and Mary Ann Lyons, eds., *Irish communities in early modern Europe* (Dublin, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> Louis M. Cullen, 'Galway merchants in the outside world, 1650-1800', in D. Ó Cearbhaill, ed., *Galway: town and gown 1484-1984* (Dublin, 1984), pp. 63-89.

<sup>20</sup> Louis M. Cullen, *The Irish brandy houses of eighteenth century France* (Dublin, 2000).

<sup>21</sup> Thomas M. Truxes, 'London's Irish merchant community and North Atlantic commerce in the mid-eighteenth century' in David Dickson, Jan Parmentier and Jane Ohlmeyer, eds., *Irish and Scottish mercantile networks in Europe and overseas in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (Ghent, 2007), pp. 271-310.

<sup>22</sup> Cullen, 'Galway merchants in the outside world', pp. 72-3.



## Introduction

trades and seemed to have strong connections with London.<sup>23</sup> As a result, I decided to pursue their activities as they moved between the English West Indies and other political jurisdictions. However, this proved difficult for a number of reasons. On the one hand, research conducted by historians such as Cullen suggested that Irish merchants in early modern colonial settings were sustained by vibrant commercial networks. As we will see in Chapter One however, there was little evidence that this Irish mercantile community existed at the British Leeward Islands. Although names associated with Galway families appeared to be associated with islands such as Montserrat, it proved difficult to ascertain their livelihoods or their fortunes. Due to what I perceived to be an absence of sources, I could not detect whether this group of West Indians continued to remain in contact with the Irish commercial networks in London, Ireland or continental Europe. Moreover, through my research in the British and Irish archives, I could not ascertain the extent to which the Irish West Indian residents at the English islands communicated with Irish groups on islands belonging to other European jurisdictions.

The one exception to this was Nicholas Tuite (1705-1772), whose father had migrated to Montserrat from Tuitestown in Co. Westmeath. Nicholas appears as a planter with responsibility for one hundred acres in a census of Montserrat that was completed in 1729.<sup>24</sup> He also featured in the *Diary of John Baker*, an edited transcript of a diary that was kept while the author served as Attorney General at the British Leeward Islands. Tuite, who was a Catholic, was a close personal friend of John Baker and his background appears in an extensive footnote in which the editor alludes to Tuite's migration to the Danish West Indian island of St. Croix in the late 1740s. There, he established a number of plantations and eventually became a chamberlain to the King of Denmark. It was in this source that I first learned of Tuite's close business connections to Denmark and that he also maintained a business premises at Lime Street in London.<sup>25</sup> A subsequent visit to the Genealogical Office in Dublin revealed that Tuite's son Robert was also a chamberlain to the King of Denmark. As a surname, Tuite was not particularly 'Irish' in character and had not been mentioned by scholars of Irish mercantile networks. However, although not a member of one of the Galway tribes, it transpired that Tuite was married to Anne Skerrett, whose father was a merchant in London and Antigua.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> As we will see in Chapter One, Galway was associated with the West Indies from the seventeenth century. The fourteen tribes of Galway were Athy, Blake, Bodkin, Browne, D'Arcy, Deane, Font, French, Joyce, Kirwan, Lynch, Martin, Morris and Skerrett. See James Hardiman, *The history of the town and county of Galway, from the earliest period to the present time* (Dublin, 1820), pp. 63-89.

<sup>24</sup> The Political Anatomy of Montserrat, 1729, TNA, EXT 1/258.

<sup>25</sup> Philip C. Yorke, *The Diary of John Baker* (London, 1931), p. 62.

<sup>26</sup> *Pedigree of Tuite of Tuitestown*, Co. Westmeath, NLI, GO, MS 161, p. 95.

## Introduction

Meanwhile, Tuite's will revealed that over the course of his lifetime, he had accrued a considerable fortune from as a result of his commercial activities in Denmark, St. Croix and London. Moreover, Tuite maintained contact with a number of individuals in Ireland with whom he had both business and personal relationships.<sup>27</sup> It became clear at this point that Tuite's inter-imperial activities merited further research. However, additional sources relating to his life and activities were not forthcoming. On occasion, nuggets of information presented themselves in the form of legal documents or transcripts of West Indian records.<sup>28</sup> In spite of this, there appeared to be nothing substantial upon which to base a rigorous study of Tuite and the commercial networks that allowed him to move between multiple imperial settings.

### **British sources relating to the Danish West Indies**

St. Croix lies forty miles to the south east of Puerto Rico, and some ninety miles to the northwest of the British Leeward Islands. However, the island's isolated appearance on the map belies its strategic position at the crossroads of Caribbean commerce, particularly during the mid-eighteenth century (Figure 1). Due to favourable trade winds, the island was a mere days' sail from Montserrat, and as such was relatively adjacent to the Leeward Islands. Overall however, there appeared to be few scholarly publications relating to the British Atlantic world that referred to the Danish West Indies. Indeed, the three islands of St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John, only appeared occasionally in the footnotes of secondary literature relating to other sugar producing islands.<sup>29</sup> There was one source however that described the nature of society at St. Croix in the 1760s. This was a series of letters that were written by Irish Dominican missionaries as they corresponded with associates in Rome.<sup>30</sup> Although the letters mentioned the names and activities of several Irish residents at St. Croix, there was little context provided by the editor of this collection. Another article gave an account of the Irish physician and botanical enthusiast, Patrick Browne. Browne resided at St. Croix for a short period of time during the 1750s and he subsequently referred to the island in a letter to Carl

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<sup>27</sup> Will of Nicholas Tuite, confirmed: 5 February 1772, proved: 27 November 1772, TNA, PROB 11/983 [Image Reference: 64]

<sup>28</sup> See for example where in 1753, Nicholas Tuite advanced several thousand pounds to Thomas Meade at Montserrat to enable him purchase the 'Water Work' plantation, Vere Langford Oliver, *Caribbeana: being miscellaneous papers relating to the history, genealogy, topography and antiquities of the British West Indies* (6 vols., London, 1910-1919), v, p. 114.

<sup>29</sup> Several contemporary works allude to the Danish West Indies in passing and tend to cite the aforementioned footnote in, Yorke, *The Diary of John Baker*, p. 62.

<sup>30</sup> See Hugh Fenning, 'The mission to St. Croix in the West Indies, 1750-1769', *Archivium Hibernicum*, 25 (1962), pp. 75-122 and Hugh Fenning, 'The Irish Dominican Mission to the Danish West Indies, 1758-1771,' *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 104(1965), pp. 233-48.

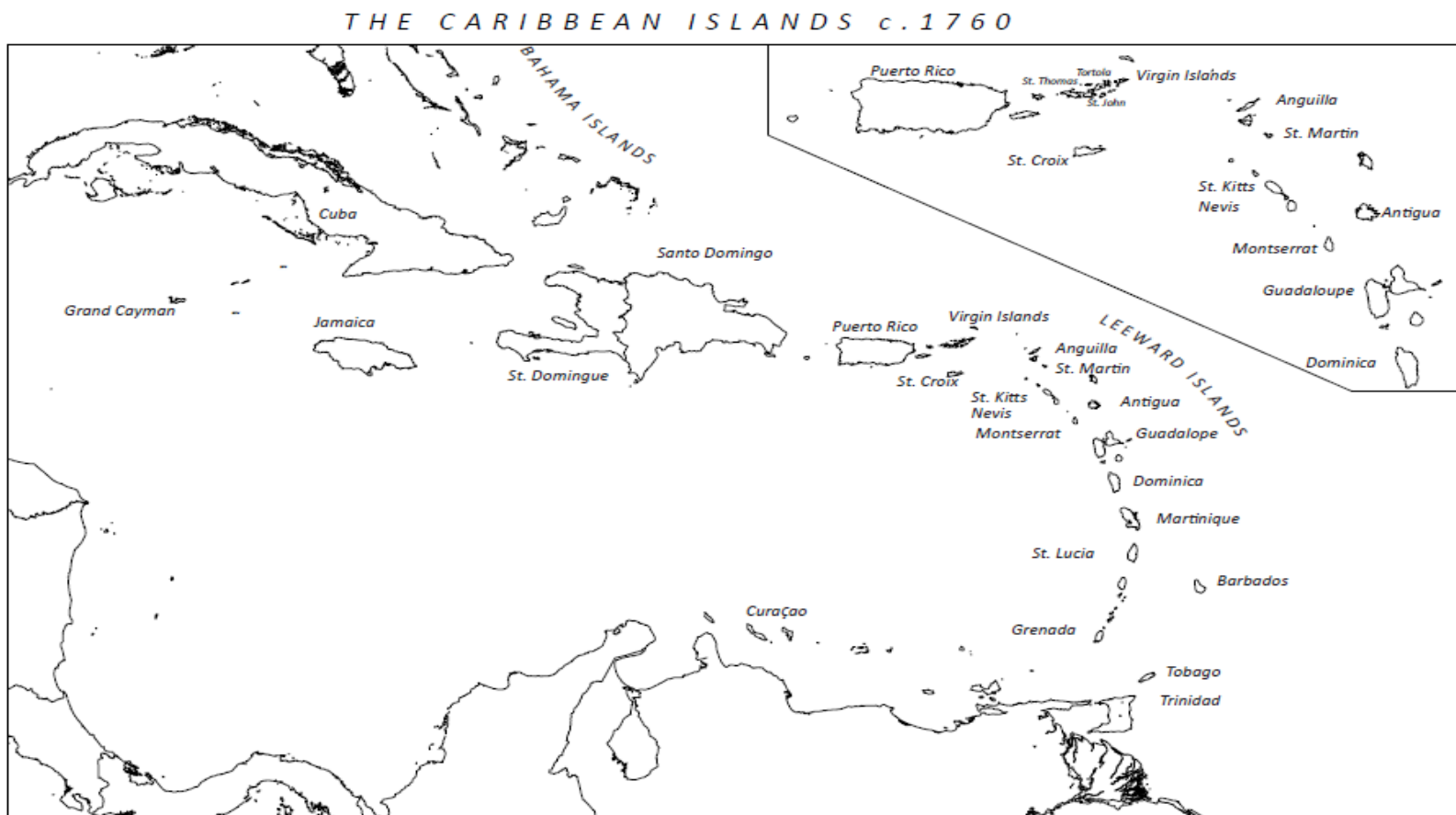


Figure 1 – The Caribbean Region, c. 1760.

## Introduction

Linnaeus.<sup>31</sup> Although it was encouraging to know that there was a distinctly Irish presence at St. Croix during this time, the absence of information relating to why they made that island their home was frustrating. Indeed, the absence of general information about Denmark, its empire and its colonies was striking. Where there were studies that investigated the nature of the Irish, British, French, Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish Atlantic worlds, literature relating to the Danish Atlantic, the Danish Empire and the island of St. Croix did not appear to feature.<sup>32</sup>

As a last resort, I sought out the manuscript diaries belonging John Baker in the hope that Tuite would feature more in the originals than he had in the edited version that was published in 1939. To my disappointment, the diaries related to Baker's later years and did not refer to his time the West Indies at all. By chance however, another bundle accompanied the first. This transpired to be Baker's original out-letterbook that documented his commercial connections within the West Indies and beyond, between the years 1749 and 1756.<sup>33</sup> Nicholas Tuite was the recipient of some of these letters. Moreover, the developing island of St. Croix was described in great detail. While Baker's diaries referred to Tuite as a close friend, they did not allude to the fact that he and Baker were business partners. In his letterbook, Baker also wrote extensively about his other Irish business associates, who were based at the British West Indies but who also had connections to St. Croix. As we will see, this source proved to be the foundation upon which I have based this study.

Although the subjects of this letterbook were British, it is unlikely that their activities could have been unravelled or contextualised through the use of sources relating to the British Atlantic alone. Conversely, the Danish sources that I subsequently found could not provide me with a complete picture of Tuite and his activities. Instead, my research came to rely on the composite use of Danish and British material. Thus, for the purpose of this study, I will attempt to outline the position of Denmark and the Danish Empire within an Atlantic context. First, I will give a brief description of Denmark and its diplomatic relationship with Britain and France in the mid-eighteenth century.

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<sup>31</sup> E. C. Nelson, 'Patrick Browne, M.D. (c. 1720-1790), an Irish doctor in the Caribbean', *Archives of Natural History*, 28(2001), pp. 135-148. See also Patrick Browne, Montserrat to Carl Linnaeus, Stockholm 24 May 1765, The Linnean Society, Correspondence of Charles Linnaeus, L3588.2.200-201.

<sup>32</sup> Denmark's intra-imperial trade in the East Indies has received more attention see, Ole Feldbæk, *India trade under the Danish flag 1772-1808: European enterprise and Anglo-Indian remittance and trade* (Lund, 1969); Ole Feldbæk, 'Den danske Asienhandel 1616-1807. Værdi og volumen', *Historisk Tidsskrift*, 90 (1990), pp. 320-352; Ole Feldbæk, 'Dutch Batavia Trade via Copenhagen, 1795-187: A study in colonial trade and neutrality', in P.C. Emmer, *The organization of interoceanic trade in European expansion, 1450-1800* (Aldershot, 1996) and Erik Gøbel, 'Danish shipping and trade with Asia around 1800', in Heinzlmann, E., Robl, S. and Riis, T. eds., *Der Dänische Gesamtstaat/The Oldenburg Monarchy: An underestimated Empire?* (Kiel, 2006)

<sup>33</sup> The Letterbook of John Baker, Bodleian Library, Oxford, MSS. Eng. lett. b. 37 (hereafter referred to as LJB).

## Introduction

Denmark controlled a geographically dispersed empire and it relied on its neutral carrying trade to fund it. During the Anglo-French wars, this proved problematic for Britain. In this way, I will examine the role of neutrality and the neutral trader in times of war. This will allow me to show how the Danish Empire and its imperial policies were informed by the desire to expand its trading interests.

### **Denmark – Empire and diplomacy**

By the early eighteenth century, Denmark was no longer the principal player in European affairs that it once was. Despite the substantial revenue received from the Sound Dues at the *Øresund*, Denmark's finances were in a pitiful state and it found itself in a politically weakened position. Its traditional reliance on the Sound Dues, together with its archaic structure of land ownership, meant that it had failed to modernise at the pace of other nations. However, access to the Baltic region remained of utmost importance to maritime nations, particularly Britain, who depended on Scandinavian timber, tar, hemp and iron to sustain its navy.<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, it was in Denmark's best interests to maintain stability in the Baltic region, and thus preserve some vestige of its former power. As a result, Denmark's economic policies were heavily influenced by the agendas of more powerful nations, particularly Britain and France.<sup>35</sup>

During this period, the balance of power among the European states depended on a delicate interaction between international politics, economics and commerce.<sup>36</sup> It was the age of political alliances and Denmark struggled to maintain this balance throughout the century. After 1720, Denmark adopted a primarily defensive position and its expansionist tendencies were checked. From a Danish perspective however, isolation needed to be avoided at all costs.<sup>37</sup> Throughout this period, Denmark managed to avoid the hostilities which characterised international relations of the time. The country was also determined to develop and maintain its policy of neutrality. This facilitated the pursuit of its own economic interests, and also allowed the kingdom to align itself in ways which were most secure and beneficial to its domestic and international interests.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> The North American colonies had yet to develop its timber trade and could not supply British demand until the later eighteenth century. As a result, British timber imports from Norway were valued at £78,000 per annum during the Seven Years' War. This accounted for one sixth of the country's total imports. See H.S.K. Kent, *War and trade in northern seas: Anglo-Scandinavian economic relations in the mid-eighteenth century* (London and New York, 1973), p. 39-41.

<sup>35</sup> R.M. Hatton, 'Scandinavia and the Baltic', in J.O. Lindsay, ed., *New Cambridge Modern History: The old Regime, 1713-63* (Cambridge, 1957), p. 339.

<sup>36</sup> John Murray, 'Baltic Commerce and Power Politics in the Early Eighteenth Century', *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 6 (1943), pp. 293-312, p. 293.

<sup>37</sup> See Carsten Holbraad, *Danish Neutrality, A study in the foreign policy of a small state* (Oxford, 1991), p. 7 and Knud Jespersen and Ole Feldbæk, *Revanche og Neutralitet, 1648-1814, Dansk Udenrigspolitik Historie 2* (Copenhagen, 2006), p. 273.

<sup>38</sup> Holbraad, *Danish Neutrality*, p. 11.

## Introduction

Following the Great Northern War, King Christian VI of Denmark sought to improve the state's relationship with Sweden. Accordingly, the Hanover Alliance of 1725, which originally included Britain, France and Prussia, came to include Sweden and Denmark from 1727. For a relatively short period, this arrangement was a harmonious one for Denmark. Christian's overall objective was ultimately to create a composite dynastic union between his own kingdom of Denmark-Norway and that of Sweden-Finland. By maintaining peaceful relations, he hoped that his son, Frederick V would then be elected as the Swedish heir apparent. In 1731 however, after a fourteen year alliance, France and Britain became adversaries once more. Courted by both, Denmark found itself in a difficult position that would colour its foreign policy for decades to come.

Wishing to improve his son's chances in Sweden, Christian VI chose to ally himself with France, and thus gain favour with the pro-French Hat party in the Swedish government.<sup>39</sup> In doing so, Denmark gained considerable French subsidies in return for unhindered French passage through the *Øresund*.<sup>40</sup> In 1743, despite his father's best efforts, Frederick V did not become Sweden's heir apparent.<sup>41</sup> As a result, Denmark maintained its position as a minor power within Europe. In spite of this, Denmark's ultimate control of the *Øresund*, its amicable relationship with France, together with its policy of neutrality, was destined to ensure that Denmark would become a major irritant for Britain, particularly during the Seven Years' War.<sup>42</sup>

From Britain's perspective, Denmark's control of the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein was seen as a potential threat to Britain's Hanoverian interests in the region. The Duchies came under Danish control in 1460 when Christian I, Duke of Schleswig and Count of Holstein, became of King of Denmark and from that time, the regions formed a constituent part of the Kingdom of Denmark-Norway.<sup>43</sup> These territories were of great importance from a social, cultural and diplomatic perspective and allowed Denmark to straddle both the Scandinavian and European political landscapes. Holstein gave Denmark territory on the northernmost reaches of the Holy Roman Empire, ultimately allowing it to usurp the power of the Hanseatic ports in the region. This claim

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<sup>39</sup> R. M. Hatton, 'Scandinavia and the Baltic', in J.O. Lindsay, ed., *New Cambridge Modern History: The old Regime, 1713-63* (Cambridge, 1957), p. 347-8.

<sup>40</sup> This was one of the several concessions made by Denmark to France, see Jespersen and Feldbæk, *Revanche og Neutralitet*, p. 273-7.

<sup>41</sup> Prince Adolphus Frederick of Holstein-Gottorp-Eutin was Sweden's choice. With the house of Holstein-Gottorp allied to Russia since 1741, there was a danger that a Swedish-Russian alliance would emerge. This would cause great difficulties for Christian VI whose initial response was to declare war on Sweden. However, he was advised against this as Denmark had no international support for such an action whereas Sweden could rely on Russia. As a result, Denmark adopted a pacific policy towards Sweden which was sustained throughout the century. Hatton, 'Scandinavia and the Baltic', p. 348.

<sup>42</sup> Denmark's policy of neutrality during the Seven Years' War is discussed at length in Chapter Three, p. 94.

<sup>43</sup> Anna Agnarsdóttir, 'The Danish Empire: the special case of Iceland', in Mary N. Harris, Csaba Lévai, eds., *Europe and its Empires* (Pisa, 2008), p. 61.

## Introduction

to Holstein meant that Denmark's Oldenburg kings were princes of the Empire, and therefore subservient to the Habsburg emperors. As a result, Denmark's involvement in Imperial politics found its rulers embroiled in the numerous religious and constitutional disagreements that characterised German politics in the early modern period.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, this German territory of Denmark allowed it to claim rights to the neutral Freeport of Hamburg.<sup>45</sup> As a result, in the eighteenth century and particularly during the Seven Years' War, this region's proximity to the contested British territory of Hanover caused tension in the diplomatic relationship between Copenhagen and London.<sup>46</sup>

### **The role of the neutral trader during times of war**

By 1700, the British Navigation Laws represented a complex collection of regulations and exceptions that governed the commerce of that empire. It was declared that 'enumerated goods', which consisted of colonial items such as sugar, were to be sent directly to England or to other English colonies. Likewise, goods which were intended for the colonies were to be shipped first via English ports. This created a protected market for colonial producers and a growing market for English manufactures. Furthermore, all traffic between the English colonies and England was to be conducted in English vessels, which had the effect of excluding foreigners from the market.

Overall, the objective of the Navigation Laws was to ensure the flow of a steady stream of wealth into the mother country. This was made possible by the enforcement of customs duties, both in the colonies and in England.<sup>47</sup> Meanwhile, France had a similar set of rules that governed its trade. From the late seventeenth century, French legislation gave royal ports *le droit exclusif*, or exclusive privileges to trade with the French West Indian colonies. This arrangement was very similar to that followed by England. Trade was to be confined to the boundaries of the French empire. In this way, the metropole supplied the needs of the colony, while the colony consumed the manufactures of the metropole. By establishing a thriving entrepôt trade at the French ports, the colonial trade became remarkably profitable, particularly during the thirty years of peace that followed the Treaty of Utrecht.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> The symbiotic relationship between Denmark and its German subjects is explored in Ole Feldbæk, 'Clash of cultures in a conglomerate state: Danes and Germans in eighteenth century Denmark', in J.C.V. Johansen, Erling Ladewig Petersen and Henrik Stevnsborg, eds., *Clashes of cultures: essays in honour of Niels Steensgaard* (Odense, 1992).

<sup>45</sup> Anton Friedrich Büsching, *A new system of geography: in which is given, a general account...of the several kingdoms...* (6 Vols., London, 1762), vi, p. 371.

<sup>46</sup> For more on the intricacies of Denmark's tense relationship between Britain and its informal alliance with France see, Holbraad, *Danish Neutrality*, pp. 5-10.

<sup>47</sup> Parry, *Trade and dominion*, p. 52

<sup>48</sup> Butel, *Histoire des Antilles française*, p. 152.

## Introduction

On paper, the French *exclusif* and the English laws of navigation controlled all aspects of the bilateral trades that were conducted between metropole and colony. The reality was often very different. Due to the sheer distances involved, together with the time lag in communication, it was often difficult to gauge the requirements of the colonial markets. If an excess of metropolitan goods flooded a colonial market, surpluses would result and prices would plummet. Conversely, colonial merchants were at the mercy of price fluctuations on the metropolitan markets. A glut of sugars on the London market for instance had the effect of lowering prices. A shortage of sugar due to hurricane, drought or war meant that prices increased sharply. In all, both colonial and metropolitan merchants financed the shipping, insurance, freight and duties payable on goods that did not always reach the prices their producers believed they deserved.<sup>49</sup> Merchants, on both sides of the Atlantic therefore learned to be cautious in their transatlantic commercial activities.<sup>50</sup> This in itself further increased the gap in supply and demand.

The shortfall that resulted came to be met by neutral Dutch traders who found their niche area in the illegal supply of goods to the colonial markets of the European empires. Buying cheap and selling dear, this group of intermediary traders relied on the free trade principles of *mare liberum*. By targeting the restricted markets of the European powers, they easily undercut metropolitan competition.<sup>51</sup> This was particularly the case during the Anglo-French wars of the eighteenth century. If the French and British colonies experienced shortages in times of peace, war brought additional hardship. Given that the Dutch traded as neutrals, their ability to access the markets of combatants gave them a distinct advantage. Despite persistent attempts to limit Dutch access to these markets, the trade continued.<sup>52</sup> Although this brand of Dutch trade was roundly condemned by the authorities of both France and Britain, it was accepted that, in moderation, the trade sustained colonial populations and thus, the production of sugar.<sup>53</sup> As tensions between Britain and France mounted in the first half of the eighteenth century, both states continued jealously to guard their respective sugar trades.

During the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748), the Dutch continued to supply the lucrative markets of both the French and British colonies. However, as the

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<sup>49</sup> Richard Pares, 'The London sugar market, 1740-1769', *The Economic History Review*, 9(1956), pp. 254-270, pp. 261-2.

<sup>50</sup> Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic, 1675-1740: an exploration of communication and community* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 220-1.

<sup>51</sup> C. R. Boxer, *The Dutch seaborne empire, 1600-1800* (London, 1977), pp. 91-2.

<sup>52</sup> Butel, *Histoire des Antilles françaises*, p. 66 and Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, p. 20.

<sup>53</sup> Frank Wesley Pitman, *The development of the British West Indies, 1700-1763* (New Haven, 1917), pp. 200-1.



## Introduction

use of the commercial blockade became more prevalent, the Dutch supply of besieged markets was particularly targeted by Britain, who by then had become the dominant naval force.<sup>54</sup> By this time, the Dutch island of St. Eustatius had become a thriving entrepôt and as a result, facilitated the widespread evasion of British customs' duties. Accordingly, the activities of Dutch merchants were specifically targeted by the Royal Navy.<sup>55</sup>

As a result, Dutch access to French markets was severely restricted by naval forces, but also by the use of British Privateers. These were privately owned, armed vessels that held a government commission, otherwise known as a *Letter of Marque*. This authorised them to search and detain ships of hostile nations, particularly merchant vessels. If it was found that such a vessel carried goods deemed to be 'lawful prize', the privateer won a share of it. Traditionally, it was found that the use of private shipping in this way allowed a nation to wage wars at sea without having to make the large investment required to outfit and maintain such a vessel. Indeed, before the establishment of the Royal Navy, England's fleet was primarily composed of privateers. In the eighteenth century however, it was still deemed worthwhile to allow privateers to assist the Royal Navy in its efforts to limit the commercial activities of France. This was due to the strategy of blockading French ports, the success of which relied on the ability to concentrate fleets of battle ships in one location. In addition, the heavy ships of the line used in naval battles were simply unsuited to the pursuit of small trading craft. As warfare focussed increasing attention on the restriction of enemy trade, navies and in particular the Royal Navy, came to rely on the ability of privateering vessels to not only destroy the enemy, but to destroy its commerce too.<sup>56</sup>

In England, the Lord High Admiral received ten per cent of all goods seized while the privateers retained ninety per cent.<sup>57</sup> For the crew and ships' owners, privateering was a lucrative pursuit and often attracted investment from consortiums of merchants. During the War of the Austrian Succession, it was thought that English forces seized a total of two thousand, three hundred and eighty five French vessels, which together were worth just under nineteen million pounds sterling. Of the vessels seized, over a thousand were taken by privateers whose prize money amounted to six and three quarter million pounds.<sup>58</sup>

Throughout the war, states such as the Dutch Republic sought recognition for the concept of 'free ships, free goods'. In essence this meant that if a ship was free, or

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<sup>54</sup> Pitman, *British West Indies*, p. 291.

<sup>55</sup> Klooster, 'Inter-imperial smuggling', p. 171.

<sup>56</sup> Richard Pares, *Colonial Blockade and Neutral Rights, 1739-1763* (Oxford, 1938), pp. 1-2.

<sup>57</sup> Richard Pares, *Colonial Blockade*, p. 5.

<sup>58</sup> Richard Pares, *Colonial Blockade*, pp. 5, 18

## Introduction

neutral, the goods it carried were also considered to be neutral. This concept was not always recognised however, and Dutch vessels continued to be targeted by British privateers. Although moderately successful, the strategies used to limit Dutch trade simply encouraged Dutch merchants to seek opportunities elsewhere. By the late 1740s, Denmark, another neutral seafaring state, provided those opportunities. In the following section, I will discuss the circumstances under which Denmark acquired the island of St. Croix and show how the State's neutral carrying trade was greatly boosted by the acquisition.

### **Denmark and Empire**

By the early eighteenth century, the Danish Empire was considerable. Notwithstanding the composite kingdom of Denmark-Norway and the Duchies of Sleswig-Holstein, Danish control extended to the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland. It also possessed several colonies in the East and West Indies. As a result, economic and cultural cohesion was of utmost importance for Denmark and Danish foreign policy reflected this fact. The issuing of monopolies and special protectionist measures to support indigenous enterprise was common practice. Indeed, Danish policy was frequently informed by Dutch and English measures and in particular the English Navigation Acts. This code, initiated in 1660, aimed at protecting the nation's colonial commerce and ensuring that its potential for enriching the state was optimised.<sup>59</sup> Like the English and the Dutch, Denmark chose to establish a series of trading companies to service its many outposts. This mercantilist approach allowed the kingdom to maximise the economic potential of its territories through semi-private commerce and trade. In this way, it could exert a modicum of control over its territories without having to sustain the expense of colonial maintenance.

Motivated by a desire to partake in the lucrative spice trade, Denmark's East India Company was first founded in 1616 by Dutch merchants, Jan de Willum and Herman Rozenkranz.<sup>60</sup> In 1620 Fort Danesborg was constructed in Tranquebar on the Coromandel Coast, some two hundred and fifty kilometres north of Madras. This became the Danish headquarters in India for two hundred years and served as the administrative post for trade in Bengal and corollary trading stations along the Malabar Coast. Several years later, the settlement of Fredericksnagore was established just north of Calcutta. Despite being entirely surrounded by British territory, this settlement came

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<sup>59</sup> Charles Wilson, 'The growth of overseas commerce and European manufacture', in J.O. Lindsay, ed., *New Cambridge Modern History: The old Regime, 1713-63* (Cambridge, 1957), p. 32.

<sup>60</sup> Kamma Struwe, *Dansk Ostindien 1732-1776, Vore Gamle Tropekolonier*, J.O. Brønsted, ed., (8 vols., Copenhagen, 1967), vi, p. 35.

## Introduction

to represent Denmark's most important outpost in the East Indies.<sup>61</sup> Elsewhere, the Asiatic Company also held a waterfront office in Canton, which conducted trade with Sumatra, Ceylon, Java and Manila.<sup>62</sup> In a similar undertaking, the first Danish ship was sent to Africa in 1654 and Fort Frederiksberg, constructed by the German Glückstadt company, came into Danish hands in 1659.<sup>63</sup>

In 1670, a charter was granted to the Danish West India and Guinea Company.<sup>64</sup> This conferred a wide range of powers on the Company, making it the principal governing authority of the island of St. Thomas. This island, although possessing an excellent harbour, was virtually uninhabited and the Danes proceeded to occupy it with a view to establishing a pioneering settlement. Following mixed success at St. Thomas, in 1716 the Danes occupied St. John's, a smaller island which was situated to the southwest.<sup>65</sup> In broad terms, the Company's administration of these islands was characterised by highly protected monopolies which eventually served to stifle the development they sought to foster. Although it was in many ways a failed mercantilist experiment, the Company continued to be subsidised and sustained by the Danish Crown.<sup>66</sup>

Like the rest of Denmark's colonies, St. Thomas and St. John's were accumulated without the use of force. While some Danish territories were inherited, others were purchased. Meanwhile, Denmark's North Atlantic dependencies were acquired by covenant and the rest were simply claimed as uninhabited islands. Overall however, the driving force behind Danish colonialism was the desire to trade.<sup>67</sup> Given that many of its trading companies were managed by members of the aristocracy, or well-connected Copenhagen merchants, the State was in a position to exercise some degree of control. However, as a result of the State's desperation to modernise its economy, the

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<sup>61</sup> In 1756, at the start of the Seven Years' War, Denmark also claimed the Nicobar islands as 'New Denmark'. A collection of twenty-two islands between the Coromandel Coast and the Straits of Malacca, the Nicobars were strategically located along one of the most popular spice routes. Originally belonging to Britain, they were notoriously malarial and inhospitable. None of the other European powers, not even France, had expressed any interest. A Danish colony was mustered but did not survive. The Nicobars remained in possession of Denmark until 1868 when they were given to Britain and became part of British India in 1869. Agnarsdóttir, 'The Danish Empire', p. 64.

<sup>62</sup> Gøbel, 'Danish shipping and trade with Asia', pp. 76-8.

<sup>63</sup> Georg Nørregaard, *Danish Settlements in West Africa 1658-1850*, translated by Sigurd Mammen (Boston, 1966), pp. 13-22.

<sup>64</sup> Eventually, when the West Indies and Guinea Company was established in 1694, a permanent settlement was established at Accra. Constructed on a large tract of land purchased from King Kankoy of the Fetu tribe, Christiansborg fort was the easternmost and last fort along the Gold Coast. This had the advantage of being the port at which many European captains called to sell the last of their wares at reduced rates. Having established good relations with the local tribes, Denmark's greatest threat was often the representatives of other European nations. Even at this early stage, the slave trade was a fiercely competitive market and the stakes were high, particularly when several nations were based in close proximity to each other. However, there were occasions when Danish representatives lacked the discipline required to conduct a serious enterprise at such a distance from Copenhagen, Nørregaard, *Danish Settlements*, pp. 43-4, 25.

<sup>65</sup> Waldemar Westergaard, *The Danish West Indies under company rule, 1671-1754* (New York, 1917), pp. 1-50.

<sup>66</sup> P. Sveistrup and Rich. Willerslev, *Den Danske sukkerhandels og sukkerproduktions historie* (Copenhagen, 1945), p. 19.

<sup>67</sup> Agnarsdóttir, 'The Danish Empire', p. 65.

## Introduction

management of such companies were in a position to orchestrate many aspects of Denmark's foreign policy. In return for monopolies and privileges, these trading companies were designed to provide a maximum return for the Danish State, while exposing it to a minimum degree of financial risk. In many respects, the ways in which these companies conducted their business was of secondary importance to the Crown.

Constructing Danish societies in far-flung locations seems never to have been the intention of the State. Accordingly, short-term policies were adopted in order to maximise a colony's revenue potential. By the 1730s, Denmark simply did not have the resources to compete with large seafaring nations such as the Dutch Republic, France and England. However, its neutral status allowed it access to the lucrative international carrying trade which existed at times of war. In contrast to the traditional mercantilist perspective, Denmark relied heavily on the continued prosperity of these seafaring nations. However, in peacetime conditions the competition within the international commodity trade was ruthless.<sup>68</sup> As a result, the Danish state granted a series of monopolies for its own international trading companies and provided protection and subsidies for its native industries throughout the first half of the eighteenth century.

Throughout the eighteenth century, issues concerning the fundamental rights of neutral nations were frequently raised. Danish neutrality represented the economic policy of an absolutist government which was desperate to promote its trading interests with countries whose commerce had been disrupted by the war.<sup>69</sup> Although it was never envisaged that such trade would reap large and sustained profits into the future, the general consensus of the Danish government was that the neutral carrying trade represented one of the primary elements in the promotion of long term economic development. If such trade happened to be perceived as 'illegal' by one or other European state, so be it. That was a chance Denmark was prepared to take and as a result, the widespread abuse of Danish neutrality which took place during wartime was entirely supported by the state.<sup>70</sup> Unconcerned with strict definitions of its own particular brand of neutrality, Denmark's main objective was to secure the position of 'most favoured nation' in terms of commercial privileges it secured from both France and Britain.<sup>71</sup>

During the Seven Years War, Denmark's policy of opportunistic neutrality was at odds with British designs in the West Indies. As we will see, during the Seven Years'

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<sup>68</sup> Kristof Glamann and Erik Oxenbøll, *Studier i dansk merkantilisme omkring tekster af Otto Thott* (Copenhagen, 1983), p. 138.

<sup>69</sup> Holbraad, *Danish Neutrality*, p. 7.

<sup>70</sup> Ole Feldbæk, 'Eighteenth-century Danish neutrality: Its diplomacy, economics and law', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 8 (1983), pp. 3-31, p. 10.

<sup>71</sup> Ole Tuxen, 'The Danish view of neutrality during the Colonial War of 1755-63', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 13 (1988), pp. 207-232, p. 208.

## Introduction

War Britain considered all trade between states as illegal if the commercial activity in question would not have been permitted during peacetime. This was the case in relation to the wartime trades in sugar and European manufactures that was conducted between the French colonies and St. Croix. Nevertheless, the trade persisted. This kind of trading often proved to be a difficult task. In order to do it effectively, it was necessary to have a thorough knowledge of international markets and their respective regulations. Most importantly however, it was essential to have access to these markets. With access to neutral shipping residents at St. Croix secured a significant advantage over their competitors within the West Indian marketplace. Neutrals enjoyed cheaper insurance and their cargoes were less likely to be seized by privateers en route to Europe. Most importantly, neutrals could trade both with Britain and with France. In doing so, they could take advantage of the structural weaknesses of the commercial regulations that governed the trade of both states.

In this way, it is clear that becoming a neutral subject of Denmark could prove to be a lucrative step. As intermediaries, Danish merchants could trade within and between empires.

### **Danish sources**

Although they are key parts of the puzzle, the sources within the British archives do not provide a full account of the activities of merchants such as Nicholas Tuite. Nor do they provide much information about the conditions which encouraged their involvement in trans-imperial West Indian commerce. Accordingly, it seemed logical to locate and assess Danish sources for what they could reveal about this cosmopolitan merchant. This presented some challenges. The first related to the dispersed nature of the records. In 1917, the Danish West Indian islands of St. Croix, St. John and St. Thomas were purchased by the United States. This meant that the records associated with the islands were divided between the US and Denmark.<sup>72</sup> Some are extant at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) facility at College Park, Maryland. Others can be found at the Danish National Archives (*Rigsarkivet*). Once relevant records were located, the second challenge that presented itself was the language in which the records were collected. Learning a new language, while ultimately rewarding, is never an easy task. In the case of the Danish records however, most were handwritten using gothic Danish script. Again, learning to decipher a different style of palaeography is gratifying in itself. However, it is a slow process, particularly when the item that is deciphered

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<sup>72</sup> See Erik Gøbel, *A guide to sources for the history of the Danish West Indies (U.S. Virgin Islands), 1671-1917* (Odense, 2002), pp. 9-10.

## Introduction

needs to be first translated into modern Danish, which is then in turn translated into English.

There are Danish sources that do not require any special language or interpretive skills however, and they show the extent to which the Irish community were involved at St. Croix. As discussed above, John Baker described an Irish presence at St. Croix from the late 1740s. Similarly, according to the Dominican sources, by the end of the Seven Years' War, there were over two hundred and fifty Irish men at the island. This is borne out by two maps which provide a visual representation of the rapid development that took place at St. Croix between 1750 and 1766. The first, which was attributed to Cronenberg and Jægersberg, dates to 1750 (Figure 2). A richly detailed map, it provides much information on the island as it was during the final days of Company rule. Through the use of watercolours and fine brush strokes, the authors of this map were able to depict the layout of individual plantations and the crops that were cultivated. In addition, plantation structures such as mills and slave quarters are represented in relation to the plantations that they pertained to. What is most striking however, is the amount of land that remained uncleared and heavily wooded at this time. Although most plantation lots were assigned, not all were cultivated. Indeed, of those that were, most had yet to be cleared entirely. In this way, the map captures the island in the early stages of its development.<sup>73</sup>

The second map, that attributed to J. M. Beck, was initially composed in 1754 and amended in 1766 (figure 3). In this way, it gives an overall impression of the island as it was in the immediate aftermath of the Seven Years' War. Although far less detailed than the earlier map, Beck's production shows the ways in which St. Croix had developed into a booming sugar producing island in the years since 1750. In addition, due to the fact that this map was predominantly cadastral in nature, each plantation shows the name of its owner. As a result of this, it is possible to perceive a dramatic change in the overall social makeup of the island. In 1750, during the last years of Company rule, a large number of plantation owners were Danish. By 1766 however, plantations appear to have been owned by a truly cosmopolitan collection of individuals. Of these plantation owners, quite a number have surnames that are Irish in origin. Landowners such as Tuite, Bodkin, Ryan, Skerrett, McDonagh, Bourke and Farrell, to name but a few, owned a significant proportion of the overall plantations at St. Croix.

Finding these sources encouraged me to begin my search for Danish sources relating to the development of St. Croix. As a result, my first exposure to the Gothic Danish script was on a visit to NARA, where some of the records pertaining to St. Croix can be

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<sup>73</sup> Daniel Hopkins, 'An extraordinary eighteenth-century map of the Danish sugar plantation island St. Croix', *Imago Mundi*, 41(1989), pp. 44-58.



Figure 2: J. Cronenberg and J. Jægersberg, 'Charte over Eilandet St. Croix', 1750, Nautical Charts Department Archive, Copenhagen, Manuscript map No. A/18-49..

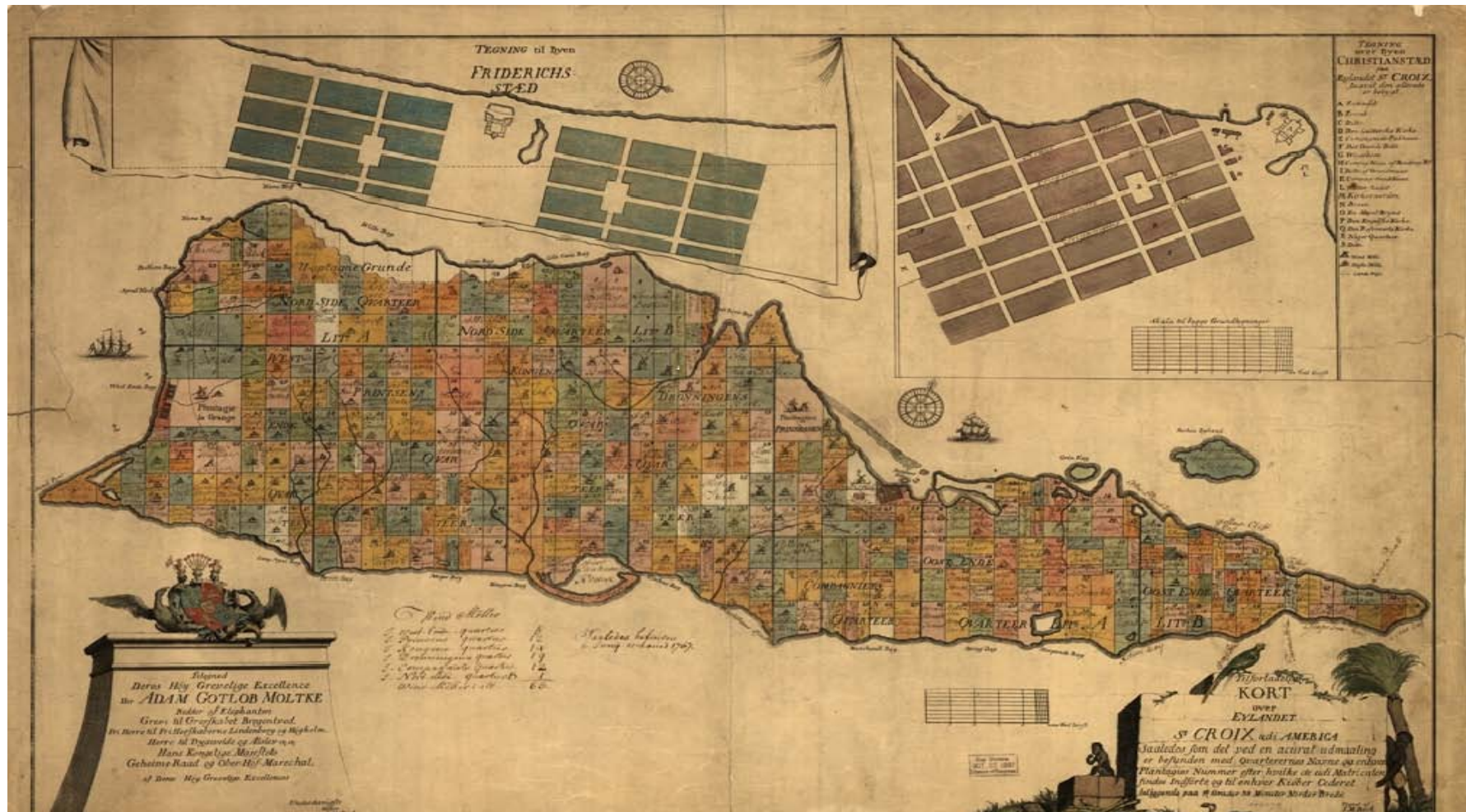


Figure 3: Beck, J.M, *Tilforladelige Kort over Eylandet St. Croix udi America*. (Copenhagen, 1754 with amendments in 1766) Department of Maps, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



## Introduction

found. At that point, I had attended some classes in modern Danish, but was entirely unfamiliar with the cryptic swirls that adorned the folios I consulted. Despite this, I searched the port books of Christiansted, St. Croix for the dates that coincided with the period outlined by the Danish maps. Although I understood nothing of the contents of these records, the Danish Customs' Officials used a very clear, Roman script to annotate the names of non-Danish traders at the island. They also used this legible script when documenting the names of non-Danish ports. As a result of this, it became clear that a number of the Irish merchants featured in the port books, were listed as planters on Beck's map of 1766. In addition, they were also linked to the British, French and Spanish West Indian islands via St. Croix. Moreover, these merchant-planters also maintained commercial links to London, Cork, the Baltic and other ports in Continental Europe.

Instead of attempting to interpret the records at NARA, I photographed them with a view to deciphering and translating them as part of my language training. This was a bewildering process. However, because the vocabulary used in the port books was limited and in list form, the process proved less difficult than anticipated. As a result, I was in a position to read these primary sources before I acquired the skills to read the secondary literature in Danish that referred to the empire's West Indian trade. This encouraged me to focus on the detail associated with local trade at the island. Moreover, it allowed me to recognise that a number of patterns of trade were particular to the Irish group that resided there. Due to the fact that I could not yet read the secondary literature in the Danish language that pertained to trade at St. Croix, I started to research the contemporary advantages of trading as a neutral within an intra-imperial setting.<sup>74</sup> This was fortunate, because it encouraged me to consider the Crucian patterns of trade not just in the context of the Danish Empire, but in the context of the British, French, Dutch and Spanish Empires.

It soon became clear that the most affluent Irish planters at St. Croix were involved in trans-imperial trade and smuggling. This is evident when the local Customs' Records at St. Croix are compared with records relating to other jurisdictions. Although the majority of the Customs' Records for St. Croix have been damaged or destroyed, the customs records for Christiansted relating to 1760 have survived.<sup>75</sup> Information recorded

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<sup>74</sup> As we will see in Chapter Four, the intra-imperial trade conducted by neutrals was generally referred to as 'smuggling'. Historians of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century appear to have been particularly interested in this area. Although considered as a pernicious activity by contemporary commentators, both Beer and Pitman were aware of the prevalence and the economic importance of smuggling to the overall well-being of empire see, George Louis Beer, *British colonial policy, 1754-1765* (New York, 1907), pp.86-131 and Pitman, *The development of the British West Indies*, pp. 271-333.

<sup>75</sup> NARA, RG 55, Entry 460, St. Croix Customs Department: Christiansted Office, Customs Journal, 1760. Box 877 D. [Hereafter abbreviated as CCJ].

## Introduction

in these documents includes the names of captains, the origin or destination of his cargo, together with the contents and value of the goods. For imported cargoes, the names of the colonists to whom goods were consigned are frequently recorded. Meanwhile, with regards to exports, the names of the colonists who were shipped goods to other destinations were also documented.

Other surviving records relating to the war years are the weighbooks for Christiansted. For the purpose of this study, I consulted those that related to the years 1761 to 1763.<sup>76</sup> These books only recorded shipments of dry goods which were sold by weight. As a result, they hold less information about entire cargoes than the Customs' Records do. Unlike the Customs' Records however, they never fail to document a ship's name. Moreover, they give a better idea of the volume of sugars exported from St. Croix during the second half of the eighteenth century. In this way, when used in parallel to the Customs Books, the Weighbooks can contribute to our impressions of commercial patterns in 1760. Despite being composed in gothic Danish script, these records offer a great deal of information regarding the import and export of goods in 1760 and as a result, give an excellent overview of the island's economy during the Seven Years' War.<sup>77</sup>

### **Secondary material relating to the Danish West Indies**

A large part of the Danish literature relating to the West Indies does not consider the intra-imperial contact that characterised commercial activity at St. Croix during this time. Prescient of the crucial role played by commerce in the island's development, Vibæk refers to this period as *storhedstiden*, or the 'glory days'. Using the contemporaneous treatises of Haagensen and Oxholm<sup>78</sup>, together with records relating to local government and shipping, the author outlines the development of the plantations and the importance of trade during the Seven Years' War. Despite this however, he fails to position the island within its international context, preferring instead to focus on the

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<sup>76</sup> Although Weighbooks are extant for several years between 1748 and 1760, most are illegible see, NARA, RG 55, Entry 465, Records of the Weighmaster in Christiansted, 1748-1778.

<sup>77</sup> Despite the limited nature of these records, they reveal a prodigious amount of information regarding shipping at St. Croix. By creating a simple database of every entry in volumes 11 and 12 (July 1761-December 1762), it was possible to detect a number of trading patterns. In addition, some of the detail provided in these records provides invaluable information relating to individual settlers. As we will see in Chapter Four, the information contained within these volumes also allows for the cross referencing of slaving vessels that feature in David Eltis' database, thus providing some additional information on this period of the Atlantic slave trade.

<sup>78</sup> For the purpose of this study I have used the English translation of Haagensen's work and the original of Oxholm's, see, Reimert Haagensen, *Description of the Island of St. Croix in America in the West Indies*, ed. Arnold R. Highfield (St. Croix, 1995) and P.L. Oxholm, *Charte over den dankse Øe St. Croix udi America* (Copenhagen, 1799).

## Introduction

role of St. Croix within the Danish Empire.<sup>79</sup> Other studies with a similar focus include Sveistrup's work on the economic history of the Danish West Indian sugar trade.<sup>80</sup> Although a tremendously informative study that includes a number of key statistics, little emphasis is placed on St. Croix within the wider Atlantic world.

Overall, due to an apparent absence of primary material, the development of St. Croix during this period between 1750 and 1766 has received comparatively little attention from researchers.<sup>81</sup> Although Westergaard's English language study of 1926 touches on the period in question, he is predominantly concerned with the years that precede the Crown's takeover of the island in 1754. While his research provides an excellent background to the period, there is little discussion of the economic factors that influenced the island during the Seven Years' War.<sup>82</sup>

A study that is more outward looking was that conducted by Willis in 1966.<sup>83</sup> Concerning the trade between St. Croix and North America, there is a chapter dedicated to trade at the island during the Seven Years' War. While it addresses the island's status as a wartime entrepôt, together with its commercial links with North American ports, this work does not examine the trades, both legal and illegal, between St. Croix and European ports. In addition, although it mentions the various merchants, planters and traders involved in the island's economy, the study does not provide a background to their origins nor does it comment on their personal, commercial or agricultural agendas.

Overall, there is an awareness among Danish historians that a large number of settlers at St. Croix during the Seven Years' War were of foreign origin. As a result, there is an assumption that the trade that they conducted was organised by, and was to the benefit of, their empires of origin. In general, planting and trade at St. Croix during this time was largely conducted by settlers who were not Danish.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, Christiansen has examined this phenomenon in his excellent study of 1978. In it, he identified what he termed an 'aristocratic class' of planters who were of Scottish, Dutch, English, Danish, French and Irish origins. In all, Christiansen used the extent of their landownership to

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<sup>79</sup> Jens Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien, 1755-1848, Vore Gamle Tropekolonier*, J.O. Brønsted, ed., (8 vols., Copenhagen, 1966), ii.

<sup>80</sup> Sveistrup, *Bidrag til de tidligere Dansk-Vestindiske øers økonomiske historie* (Copenhagen, 1942). Another excellent volume that deals with the general Danish Sugar trade is, P. Sveistrup and Rich. Willerslev, *Den Danske sukkerhandels og sukkerproduktions historie* (Copenhagen, 1945).

<sup>81</sup> The comparative wealth of information regarding St. Croix in the later decades of the eighteenth century is striking. In this section I will highlight some of the works that are most relevant to this study. However, Erik Gøbel provides an excellent review of the literature which deals with the Danish West Indies under the following topics: General history, newspapers, statistics, administrative history, trade and shipping, sugar production, slavery and the slave trade, among others see, Gøbel, *A guide to sources for the history of the Danish West Indies*, pp. 15-42.

<sup>82</sup> Waldemar Westergaard, *The Danish West Indies under company rule, 1671-1754* (New York, 1917).

<sup>83</sup> Jean Louise Willis, 'The trade between North America and the Danish West Indies, 1756-1807, with special reference to St. Croix', (Ph.D thesis, Columbia University, 1963).

<sup>84</sup> This point is noted by Svend Erik Green-Pedersen, 'The scope and structure of the Danish Negro slave trade,' *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 19(1971), pp. 149-97, p. 200.

## Introduction

define these settlers in general terms. As a result, the scope of his work does not extend to ascertaining details regarding the factors that motivated these groups of settlers to come to the island or what their backgrounds were. Although he identifies many of the members of the Irish community as having migrated from Montserrat, Christiansen does not delve any deeper into their resulting status within the Atlantic world economy.<sup>85</sup>

From the perspective of trade at the island, there are a number of articles that quantify the kinds of ships and shipments that plied the seas between Denmark and St. Croix during this time.<sup>86</sup> However, these studies tend to place the metropole firmly at the centre of the story, with the result that the independent activities of individual islanders were not considered. Despite this however, Olsen and Møller provide a thorough account of matters relating commercial legislation at St. Croix. This study gives some insight into the local inter-personal relationships that characterised the island's governance during the initial years of the Crown's takeover of the island.<sup>87</sup>

Overall, there is a sense that administrative disorder prevailed in the decade that followed the Crown takeover. As a result, international merchants and planters who possessed their own commercial agendas came to manage their affairs at St. Croix as they saw fit. In this light then, it is understandable that a considerable amount of information regarding their commercial affairs at the Danish island can be found in repositories that do not have any obvious link to Denmark or to its colonies. When this information is combined with official Danish records, it is possible to gain an understanding of the international commercial roles played by St. Croix and its settlers throughout the war.

### **Danish trade and manuscript sources**

A good example of this is the way in which British sources can be used to explain Danish patterns of trade during the Seven Years' War. The reverse also holds true. For instance, Kent mentions Nicholas Tuite's role as an advisor to the Danish envoy in London, Count Bothmer. Kent refers to Tuite in passing as an 'English merchant' who advised Bothmer on the best ways to advance Denmark's legitimate and illegal trades with England during this period.<sup>88</sup> As a result, Tuite's activities occasionally feature

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<sup>85</sup> Jørgen Bach Christensen, 'Kolonisamfundet på St. Croix i sidste halvdel af det 18. århundrede, med særligt henblik på aristokratiet blandt plantageejerne' (M.A. thesis, University of Aarhus, 1978), pp. 94, 98-9.

<sup>86</sup> Erik Gøbel has conducted ground breaking research in this regard see, 'Danish trade to the West Indies and Guinea, 1671 – 1754,' *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 31 (1983); Erik Gøbel, 'Volume and structure of Danish shipping to the Caribbean and Guinea, 1671-1838.' *International Journal of Maritime History*, 2 (1990), pp. 103-31.

<sup>87</sup> Poul Erik Olsen and Anders Monrad Møller, *Toldvæsenet i Dansk Vestindien, 1672-1917*, (Copenhagen, 1988).

<sup>88</sup> Kent, *War and trade in northern seas*, pp. 23-4.

## Introduction

among Danish diplomatic papers.<sup>89</sup> When vessels that Tuite managed or owned were seized by British forces on the suspicion of conducting illegal trade, details relating to the allegations were assessed by the Admiralty and thus, can be found in British repositories. What they reveal can then be confirmed by the patterns of trade revealed in the Christiansted port books. Likewise, Danish sources can shed light on patterns of illegal trade that were conducted by British subjects within Danish territory. This will be examined in more detail in Chapters three and four.

Other sources relevant to this thesis are the various wills that relate to the estates of Irish merchants. On the whole, records held at the Genealogical Office in the National Library in Dublin, can also yield important information.<sup>90</sup> Some of these wills relate to Irish settlers at St. Croix who were of more modest means. As is frequently the case, it is often the most affluent and powerful individuals within a society who leave the largest paper trail. As a result, this study has concentrated on the commercial and personal experiences of the relatively wealthy, Irish merchant-planter class. There are a few sources however, that refer to the less advantaged Irish settlers at St. Croix. These are rare, yet reflect an alternative experience. While wills relating to wealthy merchant-planters at St. Croix were often recorded in London, information regarding those of modest means can be found among probate records at the Danish State Archives.

There are several fundamental difficulties in using wills to document early modern communities. Due to the fact that wills served to bequeath property, such documents generally reflect the lives of the wealthier classes, giving little or no insight into the realities of those who had few material possessions. As a result, testators were more than likely to have been male, well-educated and of European origin. With the exception of widows, there are few examples of female testators who composed wills on their own behalf. Another difficulty concerning the use of wills that relate to lands and property is the matter of the inconsistency in the rates of survival of the documents, which can in turn create an artificial representation of the general community.<sup>91</sup>

Despite such caveats, wills can offer a substantial insight into the lives of particular individuals belonging to the settler population at St. Croix during the period under

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<sup>89</sup> The Danish diplomatic correspondence between Count Bothmer, Danish consul in London and Count Bernstorff in Copenhagen are of particular relevance on the following dates: 9 January, 22 January, 6 March, 27 March, 17 April, 24 April, 4 May, 18 May, 15 June, 17 July, 3 August, 6 November 1759, DNA, TKUA (301), '*Spec. del. Engl.*' Series: 63-115. Folder: Gesandtstats-Relationer med bilag fra Bothmer. File: Relationes de Baron Von Bothmer aus London, de 1759. Other material can be found in the British diplomatic correspondence between Walter Titley and Lord Holderness, 23 January, 20 February, 28 February, 26 March, 31 March, 14 April and 9 May 1759, TNA, State Papers, foreign. S.P. 75/105.

<sup>90</sup> See for example, the 'The pedigree of Tuite, of Tuitestown', National Library of Ireland, Dublin, G.O. MS 175, pp. 61.

<sup>91</sup> Nigel Goose and Nesta Evans, 'Wills as an Historical Source', in Arkell, T., Evans, N., Goose, N., eds., *When death do us part - understanding and interpreting the probate records of early modern England* (Oxford, 2004), p. 38.

## Introduction

scrutiny. Although the sample of available wills relating to the island is limited to male testators, it is possible to achieve some understanding of the wealth and assets of several inhabitants who belonged to the merchant-planter class. The testators included in this study were white males. However, the occasional provision for wives, daughters and mistresses gives a brief insight into the lives of the women who formed the other half of this social class. Moreover, the provision for less affluent friends, servants and slaves, provides a voice, however unsatisfactory, to those who were not in a position to compose such documents themselves.

Ranging widely in terms of education, social background and fortunes at death, the men included in this study all formed part of the greater Irish West Indian community. At the time of their deaths, many of them were keen to remit substantial parts of their fortune to kin at the British West Indies, London, Copenhagen and various locations in Ireland. In this way, the use of wills relating to these individuals allows us to ascertain the significance of St. Croix both to Irish West Indians, and to the greater Irish Atlantic community of the period.

In general, the wills of English speaking inhabitants at St. Croix tended to follow a format which was common to that used on the British Leeward Islands. This was probably because such wills were originally drawn up in English by British attorneys, and then later translated into the Danish language so they could be registered by the Danish authorities. It was common for individuals with property or possessions in both Danish and British jurisdictions to register their wills with both administrations. Danish wills were recorded by the Chancery Court and can be found, in Danish, in the general register books for the West Indies at the *Statens Arkiver*, Copenhagen.<sup>92</sup> As we will see, several planters of Irish origin returned to London once they had secured a steady income from their sugar interests at the Danish West Indies. Wills relating to these individuals are often extant within the archives of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury and are held at the British National Archives at Kew.<sup>93</sup> All of the wills used in this study relate to Irish individuals with Danish West Indian connections, yet the sample used is not exhaustive. Instead, it simply outlines certain groups of people with a view to examining their lives, lifestyles and fortunes.

In addition to wills, there are some Crown sources that provide invaluable information about residents at St. Croix. As mentioned above, transcripts of Danish wills

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<sup>92</sup> See Gary T. Horlacher, 'Danish West Indies Chancery Records and Index to Wills 1671-1848', (Online Resource, 1999), [<http://www.progenealogists.com/westindies/wichancery.htm>, accessed 23 September 2010]

<sup>93</sup> See for example, Will of Lawrence Bodkin, confirmed: 22 August 1763, proved: 2 February 1797, TNA, PROB 11/1288 [Image ref: 358]. The National Archives at Kew facilitates the online purchase of copies of wills that are located within the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. Wills obtained in this way have an 'image reference number' which I include when referencing them in this study.

## Introduction

relating to Irish settlers can be found in the records of the Danish Chancellery.<sup>94</sup> While most of the documents located in the Chancellery division are written in gothic Danish, there are a number of sources that are not. Among the miscellaneous documents located in this division, many are written in either French or English. For instance, on the eve of the Crown takeover, Nicholas Tuite addressed his petition to King Frederick V in French.<sup>95</sup> In addition, records relating to the Chamber of Commerce were also recorded, on occasion, in English. This reflects the fact during this period few of the planters at St. Croix were Danish speakers. As a result, it was necessary from an administrative point of view to translate official documentation in order to communicate with them.<sup>96</sup>

As we have seen, the period between 1750 and 1766 was one of change at St. Croix, particularly from an administrative point of view. In 1755, the island was taken over from the Company by the Crown. Shortly afterwards, in 1756, the West Indian region was drawn into the Anglo-French war, or the Seven Years' War, which lasted until 1763. As a result, the War can be considered as an *inter regnum* period as the Danish Crown grappled with the administrative challenges posed by its distant West Indian colonies. As we will see in Chapter Five, although Royal edicts were issued by central government throughout the war, it was only in 1764 that the Crown came to assert its rule fully at the island. Given the arbitrary way in which the island was administered in the final years of Company rule, together with the numbers of non-Danish settlers who resided at the island during the war years, it has proven difficult to find documentary evidence to establish the nature of Crucian commerce and society during this time.<sup>97</sup>

The principal sources used in this study were located in British, Danish and U.S. repositories. John Baker's letterbook, located at the Bodleian, provides invaluable information relating to the period that is reflected in the Cronenberg and Jægersburg map of 1750. This period has received little attention from historians and has been described as 'a stage midway between the pioneering origins of the colony, which have attracted a good deal of attention from historians, and the flourishing period of Danish West Indian plantation society, which has also been much discussed.'<sup>98</sup> This developmental phase in the island's history coincided with the Seven Years' War. As a

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<sup>94</sup> See for example, Will of Andrew Lynch, Planter, St. Croix, composed: 12 March 1764, proved: 12 July 1765, Danske Kancelli (232), '*Vestindiske Sager 1746 – 1771*', Series: D-36, fo. 393, # 22.

<sup>95</sup> Nicholas Tuite to King Frederick V, Copenhagen, 22 July 1754, Danske Kancelli (232), '*Koncepter og indlæg til vestindiske sager, 1746-1760*,' Series: D37-3, folder 12, no folio number.

<sup>96</sup> See for example a translation of official orders relating to the conduct of the militia at St. Croix, 'Instruction for Every Captain in this island...', 18 December 1758, DNA, Generaltoldkammeret – ældre del Vestindisk-guineisk renteskriverkontor, 1760-1770 (365), '*Estatsråd Martfeldts samling over De danske vestindiske øer*', Series: 405, Folder: Martfeldts samling II, GTK 2B 49, no folio number.

<sup>97</sup> Green-Pedersen makes this point in relation to the absence of evidence relating to the slave trade at the island until 1765, see Svend Erik Green Pedersen, 'The History of the Danish Negro Slave Trade, 1733-1807', *Revue Francaise d'histoire d'outre mer*, 62(1975), p. 200.

<sup>98</sup> Hopkins, 'An extraordinary eighteenth century map', p. 57.

## Introduction

result, St. Croix became an entrepôt for contraband European goods and illegal French plantation produce. Christiansted also became an important transiting hub for the re-export trade in slaves to the French colonies. These patterns of trade are particularly well preserved in the Customs' Ledger for Christiansted in 1760. To a lesser extent, the records of the weighmaster at Christiansted from 1761-1763 also reflect these commercial activities and also complement the information contained in Beck's map of 1766. When the above information is combined with British Admiralty records relating to the illegal trade of neutral nations, the importance of St. Croix within the wartime West Indian economy becomes apparent.

In Chapter One I will examine the eighteenth century Irish Catholic community at the British Leeward Islands and in particular, at the island of Montserrat. This chapter will address the apparent contradictions that exist in the scholarly literature relating to this group. In some sources, its members are represented as persecuted and impoverished 'poor whites'. In other sources, this group is described as an affluent and influential community.<sup>99</sup> The main sources used in this chapter are John Baker's Letterbook, a 1729 census of Montserrat, together with information contained in the Journal of the Board of Plantations and the Irish state papers relating to this period.<sup>100</sup> I will show that by considering the extant historical sources from an alternative perspective, it is possible to distinguish some characteristics of this enigmatic community that have largely escaped the attention of researchers. In addition, the ways in which religious, economic and political conditions at Montserrat influenced the activities of this group will also be considered. Having done this, I will address the issues that motivated some of these Irish Catholics at the British Leeward Islands to invest at the Danish island of St. Croix. Officially, this group was not permitted by British authorities to hold public office, engage in the legal profession, or to publicly practice their religion. Despite this, they were not actively persecuted and maintained a relatively high standard of living. However, this chapter will show how the status of this mercantile group remained insecure at Montserrat.

In Chapter Two I will outline the investment opportunities available at St. Croix in the late 1740s, together with the religious, political and social conditions that attracted members of the Irish Catholic community to invest at the island. Nicholas Tuite was instrumental in securing guarantees of religious tolerance and social equality at St. Croix and he encouraged many Irish West Indians to settle there and to take advantage of the

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<sup>99</sup> This contrast is especially noticeable when Yorke, *The Diary of John Baker*, p. 11, is compared with sources such as Richard Pares, 'Merchants and Planters', *The Economic History Review, Supplement 4* (1960), pp. 1-91, p. 15.

<sup>100</sup> 'The Political Anatomy of Montserrat, 1729', TNA, EXT 1/258; *Journal of the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, January 1750/51 to December 1753* (London, 1932); PRONI, State Papers Ireland.



## Introduction

large tracts of reasonably priced, fertile land. Through the use of John Baker's Letterbook, together with the Cronenburg and Jægersburg map of 1750, I will describe the initial plantations that were purchased, cleared, stocked and planted by members of the group in the final years of Company rule. This chapter will also consider the management strategies and individual skills of those involved in these plantations, together with the techniques that were used to develop the holdings.

In Chapter three I will discuss Nicholas Tuite's overall commercial strategy. Based in London, Tuite was an agent for a large number of the Irish settlers at St Croix. By exploiting the British Navigation Laws and taking advantage of his access to neutral Danish shipping, Tuite ensured that his commercial enterprise was as lucrative as was possible. This chapter will also discuss Tuite's role as an intermediary between the British and Danish authorities which is most evident in his negotiations during the Anglo-Danish dispute of the Seven Years' War. In all, these events display the importance of the Danish sugar trade to the Danish economy. As a result, for his services during this period, Tuite was invited to an audience with King Frederick V in Copenhagen. There, he was awarded with the title 'founder of the colony of St. Croix.' I will outline the factors that led to this event, together with Tuite's journey to Copenhagen, in order to outline the Irish merchant's complex commercial network in Europe. Among the principal sources used in this chapter are British and Danish diplomatic papers and the published *Diary of John Baker*.

In Chapter Four, I will assess the ways in which the Irish mercantile community conducted commerce at St. Croix during the Seven Years' War. Although the sugar trade was ultimately about sugar, it cannot be viewed in isolation from the other trades that sustained it. Accordingly, in this chapter I will assess the dry goods trade and the inter-island trade in commodities and slaves. I will also examine the legitimate and illicit shipments of sugar to Copenhagen and to other locations, along with the inter-imperial transfers of profits which resulted from the sale of these sugars. This chapter will attempt to examine the complex multilateral flows of sugar, manufactures and slaves that characterised some aspects of the trade at St. Croix. Overall, the nature of both legitimate and illicit colonial trade as conducted at the island will be assessed. Although the legitimate sugar trade was profitable and steady in its own right, it did not offer the large fortunes that the riskier and illicit trade with French islands could do. Understandably, the French trade was more attractive and, given the general failure of Danish officials to limit it at St. Croix, it soon became a daily feature of life at the island. Sources used in this chapter include the Customs' Journals for Christiansted and records associated with the Admiralty Courts.

## Introduction

Finally, in Chapter Five, I will assess the fortunes of the Irish community as they were in 1766. Using Beck's map, I will outline a number of Irish plantations that continued to operate after the war. In doing so, I will attempt to determine whether Nicholas Tuite's aspiration to create a haven for Catholics was successful. Following this, I look at the ways in which the character of the Irish community changed as a result of the post-war conditions that prevailed within the Atlantic world economy. Through the use of Danish and British wills, I will assess the overall fortunes and enduring local, international and intra-imperial connections of this Irish West Indian group.

## Chapter One

### The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

In the late 1740s, a group of affluent Irish settlers migrated from the British Leeward Islands to the Danish colony of St. Croix. Bonded by ties of kinship and a shared heritage, this group was a product of the British Empire. Predominantly merchants, who possessed transatlantic ties to France, Britain and Ireland, these individuals were also able planters and were keen to combine both skills in the pursuit of their personal fortunes. This chapter will examine the factors which led to the creation of this Irish West Indian community at the British islands in the first instance. In many respects, the traditional tendency to associate wealth with land ownership alone, and to solely focus on the powerful and influential planter, has overshadowed the experiences of the Irish West Indian merchant. The traditional notion of the impoverished Irish West Indian settler pervades many narratives of the colonies. While many of these narratives are accurate in themselves, they do not portray the Irish West Indian community in its entirety, nor do they reflect the multiple opportunities for social advancement that existed within the Caribbean region.

#### **History of the Irish community at Montserrat**

The island of Montserrat is one of the four British Leeward Islands, its neighbours being Antigua, Nevis and St. Kitts. Referred to as the 'emerald isle' of the Caribbean, in the seventeenth and eighteenth century Montserrat was home to a thriving Irish community. A relatively tiny island, it is twelve kilometres from north to south and ten kilometres wide. A large proportion of its terrain is barren and hilly, and its highest peak is about one thousand meters above sea level. In the eighteenth century, around six thousand acres was under cultivation and the best land was located in the centre of the island.<sup>1</sup> Situated along the chain of islands known as the Lesser Antilles, Montserrat is part of an arc of volcanic islands which stretches northwards from Venezuela to St. Croix and the British Virgin Islands. Accordingly, Montserrat is home to an active

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<sup>1</sup> Sheridan, *Sugar and slavery*, p. 170.

## The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

volcano which is located in the Soufrière Hills and rises above the island to a summit of some one thousand feet.<sup>2</sup>

The extent of the Irish influence at Montserrat has long been the subject of much discussion and debate. Books, magazine articles and documentaries have emphasised Irish genetic, linguistic and even culinary influence on Montserrat.<sup>3</sup> A discussion point for academics, writers and politicians alike, many studies have been labelled as facile and sentimental attempts to establish an imaginary common history between Ireland and its Caribbean brothers.<sup>4</sup> While it is clear that there is a tendency to over-emphasise certain aspects of Irish-Montserratian history, the Irish presence at Montserrat during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was a very real phenomenon.<sup>5</sup>

Settled in the early 1630s by Irish colonists who had been sent from St. Kitts by Governor Thomas Warner, Montserrat quickly became a destination for a motley crew of Irish servants, labourers, artisans, merchants and adventurers of all creeds.<sup>6</sup> Cromwellian policies during this period are said to have been responsible for the shipment of thousands of Irish convicts to the West Indies. However, it is always difficult to assess the scale of such transportations.<sup>7</sup> Forced migrations were not the only way by which settlers found themselves in the West Indies. Indentured servants, free labourers and artisans arrived in great numbers throughout the period. Their migration was not an arbitrary movement of people; rather it was a highly structured pattern of migration which was specifically targeted to support all aspects of the local economy.<sup>8</sup> Overall, voluntary Irish migration has been attributed to unfavourable conditions in Ireland during this period. Frequent food shortages, high unemployment and English

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<sup>2</sup> T. Savage English, 'Records of Montserrat', unpublished typescript at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies (London, 1930), pp.1-2. Between 1995 and 1998, this volcano erupted and enveloped the historic towns of Plymouth and Kinsale under several metres of ash deposits. Today, only the northern third of the island is habitable, the central third may be visited during daylight hours, while the lower third remains entirely out of bounds see R. E. A Robertson, et. al., 'The 1995-1998 eruption of the Soufrière Hills Volcano, Montserrat, W. I.' *Philosophical Transactions: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences*, 358 (2000), pp. 1619-37.

<sup>3</sup> One of the primary scholars in this area is John C. Messenger whose work is predominantly anthropological in nature, see John C. Messenger, 'The Black Irish of Montserrat', *Eire-Ireland*, 2(1967), pp. 3-26.

<sup>4</sup> For a highly critical summary of such work see, Howard A. Fergus, 'Colony of Ireland': the myth and the reality', *An Irish Quarterly Review*, 70(1981), pp. 325-40.

<sup>5</sup> St. Patrick's Day was made a National Holiday on Montserrat in 1985. Today it is billed as a 'heritage festival' which celebrates Irish culture at the island while commemorating the slaves who lost their lives in a failed slave uprising on that day in 1768 see, Jonathan Skinner, *Before the volcano - reverberations of identity on Montserrat* (Kingston, 2004), p. 156.

<sup>6</sup> Donald Harman Akenson, *If the Irish ran the world, Montserrat, 1630-1730* (Liverpool, 1997), p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> Gwynn has recorded a figure of 50,000 for one year during the 1650s, although this figure was said to have included transportation to the continent. Other scholars have suggested a more modest number of 10,000 for the entire colonial period, see Aubrey Gwynn, 'Cromwell's policy of transportation, part II,' *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 20(1931), pp. 291-305, p. 301 and Akenson, *If the Irish ran the world*, p. 63.

<sup>8</sup> L. M. Cullen, 'The Irish diaspora of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' in Nicholas Canny, ed., *Europeans on the move: studies on European migration, 1500-1800* (New York and Oxford, 1994), p. 126.

## The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

military disruption were among the possible contributing factors.<sup>9</sup> Whatever the causes for them being there, by 1678, Irish men, women and children represented just under seventy per cent of the total white population of Montserrat.<sup>10</sup> During this frontier period, the local economy was based on the cultivation of tobacco, indigo and ginger. However, following the pattern established by other West Indian islands, the island's economy came to be dominated by the cultivation of sugar towards the end of the seventeenth century. As a result, a growing number of African slaves were employed in the cultivation and processing of the commodity. The local population came to reflect this change in agricultural practices and within fifty years of the 1678 census, the white population had declined by forty percent, while the black population had trebled.<sup>11</sup>

Overall, the Irish population of this period has been represented in several studies as oppressed victims of the planter elite.<sup>12</sup> Historiography of the Irish in the West Indies has tended to focus on the indentured servants and 'free whites' of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Leeward Islands, and in particular, the island of Montserrat. Given the fact that the island's local repository at Plymouth is now buried, histories of the European communities that came to settle the island from the seventeenth century must rely on the selective transcriptions of local documents made by early historians of the region such as T. English Savage and Vere Langford Oliver.<sup>13</sup> These records, together with those found within the British Colonial Office series represent the bulk of the material which now remains. Given that a large proportion of the Irish settlers were Catholic, their presence on the island generated a substantial paper trail between Anglican authorities on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>14</sup>

Used in several instances as a vehicle for the promotion of a Nationalist agenda, many studies have been informed by documents rescued from the ravages of time and transcribed by Rev. Aubrey Gwynn, a Jesuit scholar of the early twentieth century.<sup>15</sup> Gwynn's selection however has been accused of making his Irish subjects 'less aggressive and more holy than they actually were.'<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile Pares, writing in 1960

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<sup>9</sup> Hilary McD. Beckles, 'A "riotous and unruly lot": Irish indentured servants and freemen in the English West Indies, 1644-1713', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 47(1990), pp. 503-22, p. 504.

<sup>10</sup> The number of Irish settlers was 1869 out of a total of 2682. The latter figure included English and Scottish settlers, see 'List of all the men, women and children, whites and blacks which are contained in the several divisions in the island of Montserrat', in Langford Oliver, *Caribbeana*, ii, pp. 342-347.

<sup>11</sup> Riva Berleant-Schiller, 'Free labor and the economy in seventeenth century Montserrat', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 46(1989), pp. 539-564, p. 540.

<sup>12</sup> Hilary McD. Beckles, 'A "riotous and unruly lot"', pp. 503-22.

<sup>13</sup> Savage English, 'Records of Montserrat'; Langford Oliver, *Caribbeana*; B. W. Higman, *Writing West Indian histories* (London, 1999). The bulk of documents relating to the seventeenth century were said to have survived the elements, even before the volcano struck. However, eighteenth century court records and deeds were extant, see David Hancock, *Citizens of the world*, p. 458.

<sup>14</sup> For example the Census of the Leeward Islands 1678 conducted by Gov. William Stapleton and reprinted in Beckles, 'A "riotous and unruly lot"', p. 510.

<sup>15</sup> Gwynn, 'Documents relating to the Irish in the West Indies', pp. 136-286.

<sup>16</sup> Akenson, *If the Irish ran the world*, p. 47.

## The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

was of the opinion that Irish servants, post indenture, seem to have ‘vegetated very much as they would have done in Ireland...inhabiting little cabins of palm leaves and producing just enough to buy themselves brandy and a few rags to cover their nakedness.’<sup>17</sup> More recent work has also emphasised the pious, oppressed and victimised Irish settler who, having survived an indenture, was burdened with economic subordination and a second class status. There is a consensus that the proportion of Irish settlers in the Leeward Islands decreased dramatically in the early years of the eighteenth century and studies suggest that Irish freemen and women, left the islands to live ‘quietly and obscurely in the backcountry....’<sup>18</sup> While there is little doubt that this was a feature of island society, it fails to recognise that other social strata also existed.

In the early years of the colony, tension between various groups was a feature of island life and Irish insubordination appears to have been a consistent matter of concern to the authorities. There was also the constant threat of a French invasion. From an Anglican perspective, Catholicism was synonymous with treachery and Irish Catholic colonists were accused of supporting the French assault on Montserrat in 1667.<sup>19</sup> While there may have been some truth in this assertion, this fear of an Irish-assisted French invasion lasted well into the eighteenth century. Three further French raids between 1710 and 1712 were conducted during Queen Anne’s war.<sup>20</sup> Understandably, such events did not help the Catholic cause. Irrespective of the fact that, by the eighteenth century, a French invasion would not best serve Irish interests at the island, the potential treachery of resident Catholics was often discussed at government level. By mid-century, of more concern to Montserratian authorities was the extent of Irish mercantile interaction with the French West Indian colonies. As the century progressed, members of local government who were keen to restrict international Catholic enterprise at the island increasingly accused this group of commercial sedition.<sup>21</sup> By the early eighteenth century Irish Catholic artisans, business people, merchants and planters made an important contribution to the island’s society and as such, cannot be overlooked.

As we will see, if the Irish settler arrived to Montserrat as a ‘poor white’, there were many opportunities available to ensure that he or she improved that status. This section will show that before leaving Montserrat for St. Croix, many Irish Catholics had already amassed modest fortunes, competed in international trade, were in regular contact with their European agents and owned property and slaves. Once the Irish had discarded their

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<sup>17</sup> Richard Pares, 'Merchants and Planters', p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Beckles, 'A "riotous and unruly lot"', p. 508, 522.

<sup>19</sup> Beckles, 'A "riotous and unruly lot"', p. 519.

<sup>20</sup> Sheridan, *Sugar and slavery*, p. 171.

<sup>21</sup> A notable example of this can be found in JBTP, Vol. 9, January 1750/51 to December 1753 (London, 1932), pp. 234-6.

## The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

'riotous and unruly' image, they appear to have integrated into the English Atlantic world almost seamlessly. Using the knowledge and skills that they had acquired within this arena, they set out to promote their own interests elsewhere, while maintaining contact with 'home' – the island of Montserrat.

Throughout the seventeenth century, the Irish Catholic community at the British Leeward Islands, and at Montserrat in particular, was broadly divided into two distinct groups. One group was descended from the indentured servants and transported people who had populated the island from the mid seventeenth century.<sup>22</sup> As we have seen above, this group migrated to the islands in a predominantly servile capacity and attracted the attentions of the authorities. The other Catholic group was represented by families such as the Blakes of Galway, who left Ireland to pursue the kinds of mercantile opportunities that presented themselves at the expanding frontier of the British empire.<sup>23</sup> The majority of this mercantile community were members of the fourteen tribes of Galway.<sup>24</sup> As Galway's city fathers, they were renowned for their political and commercial prowess and traded extensively with the West Indies and continental Europe. The presence of the Galway landed families in the ambit of Irish West Indian trade is striking. Their dominance of this sector of Irish trade has been attributed to the fact that many of them were able to retain a significant proportion of their lands in Ireland throughout the seventeenth century. This allowed them a degree of financial security which was not available to landed families of other counties.<sup>25</sup>

The network of the Galway families in the seventeenth and eighteenth century was extensive, and tended to focus on London, a major hub of the international commodities trade throughout the period. As a result, it represented a tremendously lucrative market for West Indian produce, and sugar in particular.<sup>26</sup> In London, kinsmen of those involved in overseas markets provided them with financial services and the various European dispatches required by those in permanent residence abroad. The fact that their London kinsmen could be relied upon to ensure that commercial enterprise ran as smoothly as possible, allowed the West Indian branches of the family to invest in new markets as they saw fit.<sup>27</sup> The expansion of the kinship network relied on strategic alliance achieved through marriage. As a result, the familial network created the

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<sup>22</sup> Akenson considers the complexity of the Irish community at Montserrat during this time, see Akenson, *If the Irish ran the world*, pp. 30-8.

<sup>23</sup> A number of letters between Henry Blake of Montserrat and Thomas Blake of Galway from 1673 to 1674, are included in Gwynn, 'Documents', p. 274-76.

<sup>24</sup> The fourteen tribes of Galway were Athy, Blake, Bodkin, Browne, D'Arcy, Deane, Font, French, Joyce, Kirwan, Lynch, Martin, Morris and Skerrett. See James Hardiman, *The history of the town and county of Galway*, pp. 63-89.

<sup>25</sup> Cullen, 'Galway merchants in the outside world', p. 69-70.

<sup>26</sup> Truxes, 'London's Irish merchant community', p. 268.

<sup>27</sup> Cullen, 'Galway merchants in the outside world', p. 75.

## The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

sustained commercial relationships characteristic of steady capital accumulation. While much of the Galway family network centred on London, there were extensive links between Ireland, France and the French West Indies. Many Galway families, along with other families of other Irish origins, were deeply involved in the French brandy trade.<sup>28</sup> By the second half of the seventeenth century, the two ports most involved in Irish trade were Saint-Malo and La Rochelle. By the early eighteenth century, families such as the Lynchés, Bodkins and Kirwans were resident in Nantes, La Rochelle and Bordeaux. Similarly, these families also had representatives at the French West Indian islands of St. Domingue and Martinique.<sup>29</sup>

By the eighteenth century, Galway families were not the only ones involved in trade at the island. By the 1720s several of the families who had begun their West Indian experience as poor whites, convicts or servants were on a social and economic par with Irish families of landed or mercantile backgrounds. As a result, by the late 1740s, the Irish Catholic interest at Montserrat was a significant one and combined the talents of the international merchant with those of the local trader. International commerce between Ireland, continental Europe and the West Indies was an extensive and highly lucrative pursuit, which often encompassed multiple branches of several of the Galway tribes. However, the keystone to the success of the Irish poor whites rested on their development of the inter-island sloop trade as a cottage industry. A resourceful group, their small-scale sugar, indigo and tobacco plantations allowed most to eke out a subsistence living. However, additional income was readily available to those who had a working knowledge of the sea and the wherewithal to construct even the most rudimentary of sailing vessels. The island-to-island sale and exchange of commodities, such as salted provisions, luxury items and even mackerel, allowed many to accumulate the capital required to expand their business or to extend their freeholds.<sup>30</sup>

This culture of inter-island trade in general commodities is a phenomenon associated with many coastal communities, both in Ireland and elsewhere. In the west of Ireland, the trade in seaweed, fish, turf and miscellaneous goods encouraged the development of communities in apparently isolated coastal areas well in advance of the development of the road networks in the nineteenth century.<sup>31</sup> Keenly aware of changes in supply and demand, the local trader was characterized by the flexibility to adapt to seasonal and economic fluctuations in the market. As a cultural phenomenon it allowed coastal

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<sup>28</sup> Cullen, *The Irish brandy houses of eighteenth century France*.

<sup>29</sup> L. M. Cullen, 'The Irish merchant communities of Bordeaux, La Rochelle and Cognac in the eighteenth century' in L. M. Cullen and Paul Butel, eds., *Négoce et industrie en France et en Irlande aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles : actes du Colloque Franco-Irlandais d'Histoire* (Bordeaux, 1978).

<sup>30</sup> See for example, Sheridan, *Sugar and slavery*, p. 445.

<sup>31</sup> Críostóir Mac Cárthaigh, *Traditional boats of Ireland: history, folklore and construction* (Cork, 2008), pp. 151-56 and Kathleen Villiers-Tuthill, *Alexander Nimmo and the Western District* (Clifden, 2006), pp. 10-11.



## The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

communities a source of income independent of the land, and thus independent also of the Anglican establishment. Accordingly, the patterns of local seafaring, characteristic of coastal communities of Connemara, may well have directly translated to the West Indies. This would explain the upward social mobility of the poor, white Catholics of Montserrat. Irrespective of the origins of the tradition, what had initially served as a survival tactic in the seventeenth century, soon became a highly lucrative way of life and sustained the Irish planting and commercial interest at the West Indies throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>32</sup>

### **Irish merchant-planters at Montserrat and St. Croix**

An excellent source of information concerning the activities of the Irish Catholic community in the West Indies is the out-letterbook belonging to John Baker, Barrister for the Middle Temple and Solicitor General of the Leeward Islands.<sup>33</sup> Beginning in March 1749 and ending abruptly in March 1757, the letterbook charts the business and personal letters of Mr. Baker during the last years of his period in the West Indies. While Baker's diaries (1751-1778) were edited and published in 1931, this unpublished letterbook gives a further insight into the day-to-day experiences of an eighteenth century, West Indian ex-patriot. The editor of the diary, Philip C. Yorke, noted that one of Baker's very close friends was Nicholas Tuite of Montserrat.<sup>34</sup> Curiously however, there is no mention in the diary of the fact that Baker and Tuite were business partners, or that they had purchased a joint-concern on the Danish island of St. Croix in conjunction with Irish West Indians, Henry Ryan and Laurence Bodkin of Montserrat.

Baker, whose letterbook supplies the quotidian details of the venture at St. Croix, was an English-born Protestant married to Mary Ryan. The Ryans were successful planters and members of the formidable Irish network at Montserrat. Mary was a sister to Henry Ryan, who was also involved in Tuite and Baker's venture. Described by Charley Carroll of Carrollton as a 'vain empty woman', Mary was a devout Catholic.<sup>35</sup> Overall, John Baker appeared to have been indifferent to the fact that his family and business associates were Catholic. Referring to Tuite, Baker remarked that "he is a Roman Catholick but I have no concern with his religion."<sup>36</sup> While mixed marriages were not common in the Irish community, the Baker – Ryan union was a mutually beneficial one. Baker, who was Attorney General to the Leeward Islands, found that his involvement

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<sup>32</sup> Thomas M. Truxes, *Irish-American trade, 1660-1783* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 89-105.

<sup>33</sup> Letterbook of John Baker, (LJB)

<sup>34</sup> Yorke, *The Diary of John Baker*, p. 62.

<sup>35</sup> Ronald Hoffman, *Princes of Ireland, Planters of Maryland. A Carroll Saga, 1500-1782* (Chapel Hill, 2002), p. 182.

<sup>36</sup> LJB, John Baker St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 22 June 1751, fo. 34.

## The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

with the Ryan family gained him access to the region's thriving Irish business community. Similarly, given that Catholics were denied participation in the legal profession, the Ryans were happy to embrace Baker as a member of the family and to be their primary legal advisor.<sup>37</sup> Over the course of the six-year venture, Baker mentioned his brother in law, Henry Ryan very little. In stark contrast to his sister, Henry was described as a 'modest, discreet man...by no means of a too sanguine disposition' who was also 'an exceedingly skilful planter.'<sup>38</sup>

Another of Baker's Irish associates was Lawrence Bodkin whose family was one of the Galway Tribes and had connections stretching from Galway to London, France and the West Indies. Few descriptions of him exist other than the fact that he was 'bred a merchant.'<sup>39</sup> An aspiring Gentleman, Bodkin was to take excellent care of the associates' commercial interests at St. Croix. His visit to Copenhagen some years after his initial move to the island shows that he was well versed in both spoken and written French and had both the ability and the confidence to negotiate with members of the Danish court.<sup>40</sup> Bodkin was to become one of the principal importers of African slaves to St. Croix during the Seven Years' War and he managed his business from Richmond, a plantation near Christiansted the capital of St. Croix.<sup>41</sup>

Of the four associates, Nicholas Tuite appears to have had the most experience in international ventures.<sup>42</sup> In a letter to the King of Denmark, he described himself as having been inducted into agriculture, plantation management and the art of commerce from a very young age.<sup>43</sup> Born on Montserrat in 1705, Tuite was the second son of Richard Tuite from Tuitestown in Co. Westmeath.<sup>44</sup> Tuite came from a family of merchants and Eleanor Tuite, a close relative of his, was a merchant at Montserrat in the 1720s.<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile his brother Robert was engaged in importing provisions directly from Cork, and Nicholas was involved in a variety of enterprises which included an

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<sup>37</sup> Yorke, *The Diary of John Baker*, p. 10.

<sup>38</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 January 1750/51, fo. 28.

<sup>39</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 January 1750/51, fo. 28.

<sup>40</sup> See Lawrence Bodkin to I. Wassersleben, Copenhagen, no date, KB, NKS 2152, 4° c.

<sup>41</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 January 1750/51, fo. 28.

<sup>42</sup> An elusive figure in the footnotes of West Indian colonial history, Tuite is referred to by Yorke in the *Diary of John Baker* as 'one of Baker's greatest friends...the founder of the colony of St. Croix.' Sheridan describes Tuite's background as 'obscure' and refers to his being engaged in a 'variety of trades, including a sloop trade in slaves and Irish provisions to St. Croix.' Aside from a general genealogy, Langford Oliver's *Caribbeana* has several short notes pertaining to Tuite and his activities on Montserrat and St. Croix during his time as a merchant and businessman on the islands see Yorke, *The Diary of John Baker*, p. 62, Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, p. 445 and Vere Langford, *Caribbeana*, vol i, p. 168, vol iii, p. 127, vol v, p. 114 and vol vi, p. 60

<sup>43</sup> Nicholas Tuite to King Frederick V Copenhagen, 22 July 1754. DNA, Danske Kancelli (232), *Koncepter og indlæg til vestindiske sager, 1746-1760*, Series: D37-3, folder 12, no folio number.

<sup>44</sup> *Pedigree of Tuite of Tuitestown, Co. Westmeath, 1600-1750*, NLI, GO, Ms.161, p. 95.

<sup>45</sup> Eleanor Tuite was a merchant in St. Anthony's parish in 1729. Given that Tuite named his first daughter Eleanor, it is likely that the former was a close family member, see 'The Political Anatomy of Montserrat, 1729', TNA, EXT 1/258.

## The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

inter-island trade in slaves and provisions. In later years he represented the interests of planters and merchants at the Leeward Islands and his counting house was considered to be one of the top twenty five leading commission firms in London.<sup>46</sup> In the early 1730s, Tuite married Anne Skerrett, whose family were successful planters at Antigua and businesspeople in London.<sup>47</sup> The Skerrets were also members of the Galway Tribes and were well-connected on the continent and in the West Indies.<sup>48</sup> Such marriages among the Catholic plantocracy were common and served to reinforce the kinship ties which characterised the Irish Atlantic world. While marrying-in to a pre-formulated kinship network was likely to have been beneficial, Tuite appears to have possessed tremendous business acumen, approaching each of his ventures with a zeal and enthusiasm of which others were envious, 'Tuite is a great master of Trade and has a clear and penetrating foresight into schemes and proposals relating to it...he is indefatigable.'<sup>49</sup>

### Conditions for Catholics at Montserrat

By the eighteenth century, the Penal Laws were not rigidly enforced at Montserrat. Permitted to discretely celebrate their religion, own firearms, horses and land, the Catholic community often maintained a good standard of living. Overall, what was not permitted was that they take part in any formal civic duties which excluded them from the legal profession and the militia.<sup>50</sup> While not officially recognised as equals, the sheer number of Catholics on the island, together with their economic and social mobility, allowed their official status as second class citizens to remain largely inconsequential.<sup>51</sup> Thus, by the early eighteenth century, the Irish who remained at Montserrat, although slightly disadvantaged, were not actively persecuted. In fact, Akenson argues that they were in a position to become more economically powerful than the British at the island.<sup>52</sup>

What appears to have distinguished the Irish community from others at the British Leeward Islands was the fact that it was decidedly intergenerational. By the early eighteenth century, families of Irish Catholic descent who remained on the islands did so for a number of reasons. Some had lost estates in Ireland, but for others it was simply because the economic opportunities there were preferential to those available elsewhere.

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<sup>46</sup> Truxes. *Irish-American trade, 1660-1783*, pp. 101, 60 and Sheridan. *Sugar and Slavery*, pp. 299, 445.

<sup>47</sup> *Pedigree of Skerrett of Ballinduff, Co. Galway, 1600 - 1700*, NLI, GO, Ms. 161, p. 95.

<sup>48</sup> Cullen, 'Galway merchants in the outside world', p. 73.

<sup>49</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, June 22, 1751, fo. 34.

<sup>50</sup> JBTP, Vol. 9, January 1750/51 to December 1753 (London, 1932), p. 237.

<sup>51</sup> This is suggested by the Census of 1729 which shows that few obstacles existed for Catholics who wished to land, firearms and horses, all of which were restricted in Ireland during the Penal era. See 'Political Anatomy of Montserrat, 1729', TNA, EXT 1/258. On the enforcement and evasion of the Penal Code in Ireland see, Ian McBride, *Eighteenth century Ireland* (Dublin, 2009), pp. 194-202.

<sup>52</sup> Akenson, *If the Irish ran the world*, pp. 118-19.

## The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

In other words, they were there because they chose to be. As a result, Irish families considered the West Indies as 'home' and although they maintained ties with their kinsmen in Ireland and in Europe, their activities and their families were based in the West Indies. This was in contrast to English planters, who went to the West Indies in pursuit of a fortune. Although they may have married at the islands, for them England was home and it was there they returned after a period of a decade or two. Such planters may have had brothers or cousins of a similar age at the islands, but it would have been rare to have had regular and personal contact with grandparents, uncles, aunts or cousins. Baker observed that at Montserrat, in particular, there were several inhabitants who remained particularly sprightly with advancing years. One of them was a woman who, it was claimed, died at one hundred and fourteen years old. According to Baker, two years prior to her death she could 'dance a jig.' Another female inhabitant of the island was said to be approaching eighty and apart from her white hair she 'had hardly anything of age about her.'<sup>53</sup> Overall, Baker attributed the longevity among inhabitants at the British islands to their state of mind 'they seem not to think themselves old and accordingly keep young, brisk and active.'<sup>54</sup> A close community and an active involvement in family life could well have encouraged this attitude.

Although there was no formal Catholic Church at Montserrat and no parish priest until 1756,<sup>55</sup> religious services carried on regardless. Long associated with the penal era, the domestic Eucharist soon became an important feature of the Irish Catholic West Indian experience. Although in Ireland by the 1720s, the practice of Catholicism was rarely interrupted, mass was celebrated with a modicum of discretion.<sup>56</sup> During periods of religious and political tension, the domestic ritual was considered a practical and discreet response. However, even during periods of relative religious harmony at the British islands, the holding of a religious ceremony at one's house was seen as an honour and a way of reinforcing social and kinship ties. Moreover, hosting a domestic Eucharist was a symbol of prestige. What is striking is that, even after they had left for St. Croix where the open celebration of the Catholic faith was accepted, mass held within the household was a feature common to the Irish merchant-planter class.<sup>57</sup>

What may have influenced this trend was the predominance of members of the Society of Jesus at the British islands, and in particular at Montserrat. Nicholas Tuite was particularly attracted to the Jesuit order. With the combination of spiritual diligence and critical thinking as espoused by the Jesuits, Tuite became reliant on them for

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<sup>53</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 4 March 1751, fo. 41.

<sup>54</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 29 July 1749, fo. 7.

<sup>55</sup> Fr. Dominic Lynch was appointed from London in 1756, see Akenson, *If the Irish ran the world*, p. 158.

<sup>56</sup> McBride, *Eighteenth century Ireland*, p. 238.

<sup>57</sup> This is evident in Fenning, 'The mission to St. Croix in the West Indies', p. 116..

## The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

guidance, both moral and spiritual.<sup>58</sup> They were, from Tuite's perspective, his 'principal support' in the West Indies.<sup>59</sup> During this period, it was not unusual for wealthy European Catholics of Tuite's status to keep a Jesuit in his household for the provision of spiritual services and to provide tuition for the children of the household.<sup>60</sup> This was particularly true of Catholics living in 'hostile communities', where the overt celebration of mass was out of the question. In such cases, Jesuits resided in the houses of the gentry where they lived among the family as relatives or 'as chaplains wearing secular clothes...of a simple style.'<sup>61</sup> In this way, it was quite possible for Jesuits to reside among a community without being detected by the authorities or even by individuals who were not members of the Jesuit circle.

There was a Jesuit presence at Montserrat from the late seventeenth century. By the early eighteenth century, the island was referred to by the Maryland province as the 'Mission of Angel Guardians'.<sup>62</sup> There in the 1730s, the Farrill family, who had associations with the Jesuits, held mass at their house on a regular basis.<sup>63</sup> In the 1750s, Mr. Cross S. J. from the Maryland province held mass at Oliver Lynch's house.<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile, in the early 1750s Tuite invited Mr. Cross and his associate Mr. Ellis S. J. to attend the Catholic community at St. Croix.<sup>65</sup>

One of the ways in which social networks and kinship bonds were maintained by this community, was the tradition of sending children to Europe for their education. While it was possible to have a tutor to school the children at the islands, it was felt that an education required more than simply bookwork. The formation of moral fibre and character was also of concern and parents generally sent their offspring to institutions which best reflected their own world view. As a result, John Bakers' sons went to England to be educated at a school of his choosing. Meanwhile, his daughter Patty, who was raised a Catholic, was sent to an Ursuline Convent in France. The sons of the Irish merchant-planter class were often educated at St. Omer's, Douai or Bruges, all Jesuit establishments which ensured access to the club of elite Catholics who pervaded the

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<sup>58</sup> This was also the case for the Carroll family of Maryland, who also held the Jesuits in great esteem, see Hoffman, *Princes of Ireland*, p. 153.

<sup>59</sup> See Nicholas Tuite to King Frederick V, Copenhagen, 22 July 1754. DNA, Danske Kancelli (232), 'Koncepter og indlæg til vestindiske sager, 1746-1760', Series: D37-3, folder 12, no folio number.

<sup>60</sup> The Selbys, a wealthy recusant family from Biddlestone, into which Tuite's daughter Anne married, kept Thomas Collingwood S.J. on site as the family chaplain, see Tamsyn Hadden, 'Collingwood, George (c.1679-1716)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5931>, accessed 24 June 2010]

<sup>61</sup> Thomas Hughes, *History of the Society of Jesus in North America* (4 vols., London 1917), ii (text), p. 70.

<sup>62</sup> See, Archives of the Maryland Province, Georgetown University, Box: 3 Folder: 7 Varia-Society of Jesus- (1633-1874) [4 W1-Z2a], fos. 51 and 71.

<sup>63</sup> See the case of Mr. Edward Jessop who was accused of being a Catholic, JBTP, Vol. 8, January 1741/42 to December 1749 (London, 1931), pp. 306-10.

<sup>64</sup> Yorke, *The Diary of John Baker*, p. 87.

<sup>65</sup> Nicholas Tuite to King Frederick V, 26 August 1754, DNA, Danske Kancelli (232), 1699-1771, 'Koncepter og indlæg til vestindiske sager, 1746-1760', Series: D-37-3, Folder 12.

## The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

commercial and political establishments of Europe. This was consistent with the practice of Catholic elite families in Ireland where the tradition of sending children to the continent for their schooling was well established.<sup>66</sup>

A European education was paramount for the children of this Irish merchant-planter class. It was believed that their future success within the trade was dependent on literacy, numeracy and the mastering of at least one other language besides English, usually French. Many parents found the colonial environment unsuitable for the moral development of their children who were particularly indulged at the islands and it was considered that a good education was a European education. It was felt that wealth alone was insufficient to secure a comfortable standard of living and Baker often mused that ‘a fortune can be spent, an education cannot.’<sup>67</sup>

Parents found it difficult to exert the same strict discipline as perhaps they could have in Europe. Baker often lamented the fact that in the West Indies, the culture of indulging one’s offspring was commonplace, accepted and even expected.<sup>68</sup> It was thought that, while the West Indian environment had the potential to ruin the character of a little boy, for girls it was ‘not...of so bad consequence.’<sup>69</sup> As a result, boys were sent to Europe several years earlier than were girls, who were tutored in the areas of deportment, music, dance and languages before receiving a formal education. Tutors were hired at the British islands to give children a good grounding in reading, writing, maths and French. Girls were also encouraged to take dance and music classes. Before she was sent to Europe, Patty Baker regularly attended a local school house and took harpsichord lessons with Mr. Morgan at St. Kitts.<sup>70</sup> By the age of five she was a voracious reader, even out of school and on visits to her grandparents in Montserrat she was introduced to literary works which she enjoyed thoroughly.<sup>71</sup> Well before she left for her French boarding school, her father remarked with pride that she had ‘acquired a manner of curtsying and such a carriage and behaviour as, I will assure you, you seldom meet with in a girl of her age in England.’<sup>72</sup>

While Patty stayed at the West Indies until she was twelve, her brothers were sent to Europe at an earlier age. At age four, John Baker’s son Tom was sent to Europe in a Montserrattian ship under the command of Captain McDonagh. Accompanied by two other young boys from the islands, their guardian was an unnamed slave who had, for

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<sup>66</sup> See Patricia O’Connell, *The Irish College at Santiago de Compostela, 1605-1769* (Dublin, 2007) and T. Corcoran, ‘Early Irish Jesuit Educators (I)’, *An Irish Quarterly Review*, 29(1940), pp. 545-60.

<sup>67</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 1 August 1755, fo. 89.

<sup>68</sup> He remarked that spoiling one’s child was such a pervasive habit that ‘there was hardly any getting out of it...’, LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 28 February 1753, fo. 53.

<sup>69</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Brother, London, 28 February 1753, fo. 53.

<sup>70</sup> Yorke, *The Diary of John Baker*, p. 73.

<sup>71</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 18 April 1752, fo. 42.

<sup>72</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 8 October 1751, fo. 37.

## The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

'his merits and services', been made free.<sup>73</sup> No doubt accustomed to such rites of passage, Tom's uncle Harry Ryan, sent Tom two guineas and a fat sheep for his voyage.<sup>74</sup>

The Jesuit connection with the West Indies extended to education and many of the orders' institutions on the continent were attended by boys of West Indian origins. A college at St. Omer, located in Normandy, had been established in the sixteenth century with a view to training the priests of the English province.<sup>75</sup> As time progressed, the college at St. Omer came to provide a classical education to Catholic boys from Ireland, England, the West Indies and also North America.<sup>76</sup> Charley Carroll of Carrollton reinforced his family's connection with the school with his attendance there from 1748 to 1759. Although spiritual development was paramount, Charley's father desired that he also become proficient in areas such as international commerce and finance, the law, land surveying and all aspects of the management of his Maryland estate. In addition, Charley was also expected to acquire the social graces and polish required to mix with the genteel members of elite society.<sup>77</sup>

Overall, an education at St. Omer's gave its students the training not only to manage their own affairs, but also to access the higher social echelons. In addition, its past pupils represented an international network of Jesuit-educated individuals. As a result, this network served to reinforce and complement the kinship bonds already relied upon by Irish Catholics outside of Ireland. Among the Irish pupils with connections to the West Indies was Nicholas Tuite's friend Richard Ellis S. J., who attended the school from 1728 to 1736.<sup>78</sup> During this time, Robert and Richard Tuite<sup>79</sup> and Patrick and Charles Farrill of Montserrat were also at St. Omer's.<sup>80</sup> Robert Skerret, Nicholas Tuite's nephew from Antigua, attended in the late 1730s.<sup>81</sup> Meanwhile, Michael Murphy from Montserrat, attended from 1737 to 1745, and eventually became a Jesuit within the Maryland province.<sup>82</sup> Subsequent generations of Irish West Indian boys are also well-represented in the records of St. Omer's, many of them having been born at the Danish

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<sup>73</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 6 May 1753, fo. 55.

<sup>74</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Brother, London, 20 June 1753, fo. 56.

<sup>75</sup> Bernard Ward, 'College of Saint Omer,' *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (15 vols., New York, 1907 - 1912) xiii, online resource, [accessed 26 Jun. 2010 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13365c.htm>]

<sup>76</sup> Geoffrey Holt, *St. Omer's and Bruges Colleges, 1593-1773, a biographical dictionary* (London, 1977).

<sup>77</sup> Hoffman, *Princes of Ireland*, pp. 144-51.

<sup>78</sup> Holt, *St. Omer's and Bruges Colleges*, p. 150.

<sup>79</sup> While Robert was Nicholas' son, Richard Tuite was either a younger brother or a nephew, see Holt, *St. Omer's and Bruges Colleges*, p. 267.

<sup>80</sup> Holt, *St. Omer's and Bruges Colleges*, p. 98.

<sup>81</sup> Robert was Anne Skerret's nephew and eventually became involved in planting and trading at St. Croix, see Holt, *St. Omer's and Bruges Colleges*, p. 242 and LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Nicholas Tuite, London, 27 January 1752, fo. 39.

<sup>82</sup> Holt, *St. Omer's and Bruges Colleges*, p. 187.

## The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

island of St. Croix.<sup>83</sup> Edmund Bourke, son of Theobald Bourke, attended at Bruges in the late 1760s, while William Ryan's sons, Henry, John and William all from Montserrat and St. Croix also attended during the 1760s.<sup>84</sup>

The attainment of a classical education and social skills were essential elements of a European education. Of equal importance was securing the hand of an eligible spouse, from a good family. Here, the Jesuits often played a part in the matchmaking process. In June 1763, John Baker travelled to France with a view to transferring his daughter Patty from an Ursuline convent in Lille to another Ursuline convent in Paris. Patty, or Louisa as she was now known, was being groomed as a debutante, and her new curriculum, which included dance and harpsichord lessons, started immediately.<sup>85</sup> Within a month, she had been introduced to Charley Carroll by Alexander Crookshanks S. J., an old friend of the Carroll family and procurator of the Jesuit mission in England and Scotland. Charley, assured of Louisa's pedigree and fortune, was beguiled by her charm and good looks.<sup>86</sup>

Other families with strong Jesuit connections found suitable spouses in Nicholas Tuite's daughters. Eleanor Tuite, who was born at Montserrat in 1732, married Thomas Selby of Biddlestone in 1751.<sup>87</sup> The Selbys were a noted recusant family and Thomas and Eleanor opted to educate their sons Charles, Thomas and Nicholas Tuite Selby at St. Omer's during the 1760s.<sup>88</sup> Anne Tuite married Thomas Stapleton, the son of another prominent recusant family from the north of England. The Stapletons of Carlton and Bedale were descendents of the Barony of Beaumont, and Thomas' brother Gregory was the president of St. Omer's in 1787.<sup>89</sup> Such marriages represented the commercial and social spheres within which Nicholas Tuite operated. This is also evident in the marriage

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<sup>83</sup> With the French suppression of the order in 1762, the Jesuits were forced to move staff and students en masse to a safe location in Bruges. There the college remained until the general suppression of the order in 1773, upon which the establishment moved to Liège, see Bernard Ward, 'College of Saint Omer,' *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (15 vols., New York, 1907 - 1912) xiii, online resource, [accessed 26 Jun. 2010 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13365c.htm>]

<sup>84</sup> Holt, *St. Omer's and Bruges Colleges*, pp. 44 and 187.

<sup>85</sup> Miss Skerret, an Ursuline novice was involved in Patty's care while at Lille see, Yorke, *The Diary of John Baker*, pp. 172, 169-79.

<sup>86</sup> Despite his romantic aspirations towards her, Charley's father did not approve. A sketch of John Baker's fortunes was requested of Nicholas Tuite who duly obliged. When it was found that financially, John Baker was not in the same league as the Carrolls, the union was deemed unsuitable. Baker, who was worth £45,000, intended to bequeath his fortune to all five of his children and Charles Carroll Senior was sceptical of this arrangement, 'and what further fortune may she [Louisa] reasonably expect at his death under his promise to make her equal to any other child?', see Charles Carroll of Carrollton to Charles Carroll of Annapolis, 'Some General Terms' and to Nicholas Tuite, December 22 1763, 'A list or valuation of the Estates John Baker Esq. in the island of St. Croix in America', Maryland Historical Society, MS 206, no. 104c and 104b and Hoffman, *Princes of Ireland*, p. 176n.

<sup>87</sup> Pedigree of Nicholas Tuite, National Archives, Dublin, G.O. MS 175, pp. 61.

<sup>88</sup> Holt, *St. Omer's and Bruges Colleges*, p. 234.

<sup>89</sup> Fr. Thomas Thwing, one of Thomas' ancestors had the honour of being the last Catholic priest martyred in England when he was hanged, drawn and quartered in 1680, see, Papers of the Stapleton (Incorporating Errington and Tempest) Family, Lords Beaumonts of Carlton Towers, University of Hull, Finding Aid, [Online edition, accessed 24 June 2010]



## The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

between his third daughter Mary Winifred and Justin MacCarthy Reagh, of Springhouse, Co. Tipperary. The MacCarthy Reagh's family estate in Tipperary was a considerable one, and during the penal era, Justin's father Denis MacCarthy had taken refuge in France. On his death in 1761, Justin sold the family lands and settled in Toulouse, where he eventually acquired the title of Count MacCarthy. Some of the MacCarthy children were born in Dublin. Their sons attended St. Omer's, one of whom was Nicholas Tuite MacCarthy, who later became a Jesuit priest.<sup>90</sup>

During the penal era, Catholics were excluded from the legal professions. This meant that all forms of courtroom work involving the administration of justice was conducted by those of the Anglican faith, usually barristers. Despite this however, up to the late eighteenth century, non-litigious or 'private' business was not restricted in this sense. Technically, any literate man could establish himself as an attorney in the area of conveyancing, which involved drafting deeds, legal documents, mortgages, wills and other settlements.<sup>91</sup> As a result, the art of conveyancing became largely 'monopolized and perfected by Catholics'. Moreover, another branch of the law known as 'Special Pleading' was also well-represented by Catholics.<sup>92</sup> In light of this, it is not surprising to find Catholics at the West Indies directly involved in matters relating to mortgages, wills and other legal matters. This favourable position was precarious however, and could have changed at any time. In this light, Wall suggested that due to growing restrictions on land ownership, Catholics were encouraged to become involved in trade. Although it was possible to purchase land, many Catholics were reluctant to do so owing to the insecurities of titles associated with land in fee.<sup>93</sup>

Commercial enterprise was a safer option for those who wished to invest capital in as discreet a manner as possible.<sup>94</sup> To avoid detection, discretion was essential in such matters. Due to the fact that most Irish trade at the British islands relied on connections with London and, to a lesser extent ports in France, any profit was held for safe keeping in the hands of overseas kinsmen or associates. Thus, those who possessed the initial capital to invest in commercial enterprise, however small the stakes, were likely to be

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<sup>90</sup> See Holt, *St. Omer's and Bruges Colleges*, p. 167 and G. Martin Murphy, 'MacCarthy Reagh, Justin, Count MacCarthy in the French nobility (1744–1811)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edition, May 2007 [accessed 24 June 2010]

<sup>91</sup> David Lemmings, *Professors of the Law: barristers and English legal culture in the eighteenth century* (Oxford, 2000), p. 36.

<sup>92</sup> A special pleader was a lawyer who gave complex and analytical opinions on cases submitted to him, with the view of preparing civil or criminal pleadings for the courts. This role was largely abolished in 1852, see Bernard Kelly, 'Catholics and the Bar,' *The Irish Rosary*, 31(1927), p. 722.

<sup>93</sup> Louis M. Cullen, 'Catholic social classes under the Penal Laws' in Tom Power and Kevin Whelan, eds., *Endurance and emergence: Catholics in Ireland in the eighteenth century* (Dublin, 1990), pp. 57-8.

<sup>94</sup> Maureen Wall, 'The rise of the Catholic middle class in eighteenth century Ireland', *Irish Historical Studies*, 42(1958), pp. 91-115.

## The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

rewarded with a secure and guaranteed return.<sup>95</sup> One did not need international connections to trade however, and it was possible to invest profits locally in moveable capital, such as provisions, commodities or slaves.<sup>96</sup> As such, possibilities for upward social mobility existed.

These possibilities for social and economic advancement have not been considered by many of the scholars who have focussed on the oppressed nature of the poor white Irish settler at Montserrat. The reasons for this are two fold. First, a scarcity of documentation relating to the seventeenth century serves to highlight the 'riotous' and poor Irish at Montserrat. While such accounts may well have represented the reality at the island, particularly during the early years of the colony, once Irish colonists became integrated into their new communities, it became less in their interest to retain such unruly ways. Accordingly, there was less reason for the Anglican authorities to write home about them, leaving us with a gap in the records that is often interpreted as the absence of such individuals. Although there was a marked drop in the number of white settlers at the island from all walks of life, it cannot be assumed that the poor whites simply deserted the island as a result of their impoverished condition. This is borne out by the Census of Montserrat which was composed in 1729.

### **The Census of Montserrat, 1729**

The Irish families involved in trade and planting are represented in the Census of Montserrat which was taken in 1729. This has been described as 'one of the most comprehensive studies ever made of a colonial population before the American Revolution.'<sup>97</sup> Listing two hundred and forty five households, the census gives information concerning the area of land and the numbers of slaves owned by each. It also gives a breakdown of the ages and gender of the constituent members of each household, white and black. What is most interesting however, is the fact that the occupation of each head of household is also listed. As a result, the study gives an excellent overview of the different social groups which formed part of this society. Overall, it becomes clear that although the sugar industry dominated most aspects of Leeward Island life, it was not the only means of capital accumulation. Moreover, given the rich social fabric of society at Montserrat, the planter was not necessarily the most affluent member of society. As we will see, land ownership was not the only indicator of wealth.

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<sup>95</sup> David Dickson, 'Catholics and trade in eighteenth century Ireland,' p. 94.

<sup>96</sup> The leasing of slave labour was a profitable business. It meant that, after the initial investment, owners could recoup costs quite quickly. See LJB, John Baker St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, 1 August 1755, fo. 89 and 1 January 1756, fo. 92.

<sup>97</sup> Robert V. Wells, *The population of the British colonies in America* (Princeton, N.J., 1975), p. 229.

## The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

As mentioned above, Catholics tended not to purchase land or buildings outright, but to lease them.<sup>98</sup> This was due in many respects to the fact that, because Catholic marriages were not recognised by the Anglican authorities, all children resulting from such unions were deemed to be illegitimate. As a result, they could not inherit lands. Sheridan has noted the trend at Montserrat not to own plantations in 'fee simple', but to lease them.<sup>99</sup> In this light, land alone should not be used as an indicator of wealth or social status at the West Indies. Beckles has described the seventeenth century Irish community at Montserrat as a predominantly disadvantaged group of economic subordinates, because they were 'clustered at the lower end of the property owning scale with very modest buildings...'<sup>100</sup> While this may have reflected their position in the seventeenth century, a lot had changed by the eighteenth. In his study of the 1729 census, Wells notes that the size and composition of a household is a good indicator of wealth. Generally, poor households tended to be smaller, with fewer children. In this light, he notes that that planter's families were not the largest of the island's households and thus, they were not the most affluent. Fundamentally however, he observes that 'merchants seem to have owned less land than any other group, but were more likely to have two or more houses.'<sup>101</sup>

The census shows that many of the Irish individuals who remained at the island did reasonably well. While there are several examples of Irish Catholic planters, it should be remembered that for this group, planting and trading went hand in hand. However, a profitable trade in his or her West Indian produce was the primary objective. This was not always the case for the typical English West Indian planter, who became utterly dependent on metropolitan agents to buy his or her sugar in return for the quotidian articles required by the plantation. The difference can be found in the very fact that the Irish group, where they held land, did not leave production to overseers. As creoles, their home was the West Indies. Accordingly, they looked after their own affairs in an efficient manner and regarded absenteeism as a fool's game.<sup>102</sup> The stereotypical West Indian nabob was the target of much parody during the era and brash displays of wealth often accompanied a planter's rising social status. Sugar however, was an expensive industry. To prosper, it was imperative that plantations were well managed and that produce achieved the best prices possible. It was very common for large planters to find themselves in significant debt. Borrowing to sustain production and an opulent lifestyle,

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<sup>98</sup> Cullen, 'Catholic social classes under the Penal Laws', p. 58.

<sup>99</sup> Sheridan, *Sugar and slavery*, p. 177.

<sup>100</sup> Beckles, 'A "riotous and unruly lot"', p. 508.

<sup>101</sup> Wells, *Population of the British colonies*, pp. 227, 231.

<sup>102</sup> 'You may as well think of getting somebody to practice the Law or Physick for you, as planting for you while you lived in England...', LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker in London, 12 August 1751, fo. 35.

## The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

planters often had no real experience of managing their plantations or dispatching their produce to the best market. Overall, they were, with few exceptions ‘inept businessmen and uninterested in cost-saving innovations...’<sup>103</sup> Overseers and managers looked after their affairs. As a result, it was often found that the hired staff was more concerned about their own prosperity than that of the plantation owner.<sup>104</sup> As a result of such inefficiencies, many plantations were not as profitable as they could have been.<sup>105</sup>

Given that many planters were in debt, were poor businessmen and managed their estates inefficiently, the extent of their property portfolios may not be the best indicator of financial liquidity. As we have seen, the accumulation of power, status and capital was possible within other spheres of industry and enterprise. In consideration of the fact that Irish Catholics at Montserrat were keen to remain discreet about their accumulation of capital and that, although they were not prohibited from doing so, this group was wary about purchasing land at the island; it could be suggested that the census of Montserrat, which was taken in 1729, is not the best method of determining their wealth, influence or status.

### **The Parish of St. Patrick’s**

If we look at the entries relating to those who subsequently invested in St. Croix twenty years later, their fortunes appear to be relatively modest. What is fascinating is that all three of the Montserratian families are represented in the census of 1729, the Bodkins, Tuites and Ryans were all from the same parish. Moreover, given that the census was taken two decades before the Irish migration to St. Croix, it gives us a snapshot of Laurence Bodkin, Nicholas Tuite and Henry Ryan as teenagers and young adults.

Thomas Ryan’s family had a total of sixty four acres, twenty four of which were cultivated. Of that twenty four, only eighteen was in sugar cane. Despite this, they had a cattle mill and they owned five horses, seventeen cows, a hog and five goats. The household itself was composed of one woman, three girls between eight and fourteen, two boys between nine and fifteen and two men. One of the men named as Thomas Ryan, the other was presumably his son. They had no white servants but they did own eight male slaves, six female slaves and four child slaves. Security must have been an issue as Thomas Ryan was in possession of three firearms. The size of Ryan’s family

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<sup>103</sup> Sheridan, *Sugar and slavery*, p. 387.

<sup>104</sup> ‘Overseers will mind their own interests more than yours...the thing is little or nothing without personal presence...’ LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker in London, 8 October 1751, fo. 37.

<sup>105</sup> By the mid eighteenth century there remained much that could be improved upon in the management of plantations at the British Leeward islands, see Richard B. Sheridan, ‘Samuel Martin, innovating sugar planter of Antigua, 1750-1776’, *Agricultural History*, 34(1960), pp. 126-139.

## The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

roughly equates to the family tree provided by Yorke.<sup>106</sup> In that diary, Thomas Ryan is said to have had five boys and two girls.

The Bodkin family was a very small unit. Anthony Bodkin was at the head of the family and he shared his house with a boy aged between the ages of nine and fifteen. This was most likely to have been Laurence Bodkin, who was later to become one of St. Croix's most prolific slave traders. Despite having no land, the family owned eight male slaves, four female slaves and a little boy who was also a slave. The fact that they owned a horse suggests that they were reasonably prosperous. Meanwhile, the family of Nicholas Tuite occupied one hundred acres. In 1729, Tuite was aged twenty four and he appears to have lived and planted alone, without family or the assistance of servants. He owned nineteen male slaves, nineteen female slaves and three slaves who were boys. Of the one hundred acres, Tuite had eighty in cultivation, fifty acres being in sugar cane. Owing no firearms, Tuite did possess three horses and eight mules. He also owned a windmill, one of but two in his parish. In all, he appears to have been running an efficient sugar plantation that was well-capitalised.

### **Tuite's commercial activities during the Austrian War of Succession**

By the late 1740s, Nicholas Tuite was heavily involved in the provisioning trade, and had also invested in a privateering operation. Having made a significant fortune through this involvement with Dutch interests trading between Cork, St. Eustatius and the French colonies, Tuite had significant capital to invest. During the Austrian War of Succession (1740-48), Tuite had an interest in the privateer *Surprize*<sup>107</sup> and he was listed as the lead investor in a privateering venture which was led by Captain Joseph Redmond. A large ship of three hundred and eighty tons, she had a crew of two hundred men.<sup>108</sup> A growing trend was for merchant vessels to obtain a *Letter of Marque* in order to conceal their own illicit commercial transactions. In this way, they could defend their cargoes against attack and adopt an offensive position if under threat. Such vessels rarely bothered enemy traders.<sup>109</sup> This may well have been the case with Tuite's *Surprize* for there is no evidence in the Prize Court records of its having seized an enemy ship.

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<sup>106</sup> Yorke, *The Diary of John Baker*, p. xi.

<sup>107</sup> Privateers were privately owned, armed vessels that held a government commission, or *Letter of Marque*. This authorised them to search and detain ships of hostile nations, particularly merchant vessels. For the crew and ships' owners, privateering was a lucrative pursuit and often attracted investment from consortia of merchants, see Introduction, p. 15.

<sup>108</sup> Not to be trifled with, the *Surprize* was kitted out for action and carried 'twenty guns... two hundred small arms, two hundred cutlasses, eighty barrels of powder, eighty rounds of Great Shot and about one tone weight of small shott...' She had provisions on board for six months and was equipped with 'two suits of sails, five anchors, five cables and about ten tons weight of spare cordage...' Aside from the Captain and his regular crewmen, there was a lieutenant, a gunner, a boatswain, a carpenter, a cook and a surgeon. Letter of Marque, Ship: the *Surprize*, Commander Joseph Redmond. TNA, HCA 26/4/49

<sup>109</sup> Pares, *Colonial Blockade*, p. 5.

## The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

Given the scarcity of provisions at the French islands during the war, large profits were to be gained through the illegal supply of British commodities to these regions.<sup>110</sup> Tuite's provisioning business, a trade he conducted from Lime Street in London, and one which was heavily reliant on Irish produce, began to feel the pinch of the Admiralty's increasing desire to exercise control over shipments to the West Indies. The practice of imposing embargoes on Irish export goods was becoming an obstruction to commercial enterprise. Indeed, many firms with a stake in the victualing industry found the continuous interference by the authorities to be a nuisance. Overall, merchants favoured smaller ships with smaller cargoes which could undertake the transatlantic voyages more regularly and minimise the risk of carrying large and valuable cargoes of provisions. Moreover, smaller, more regular cargoes of provisions meant that the ship's captain could conduct his business more rapidly and target smaller and more lucrative markets. When an embargo was enforced however, a ship was frequently obliged to wait for an Admiralty convoy to ensure that the ship was safe, and that it travelled exactly where it planned to. Waiting for such an escort could prove very costly for many operations.

Despite this, Irish provisions continued to fall into enemy hands and the Admiralty was determined to prevent the practice. On 4 September 1746, an embargo was placed on 'all ships laden with salt beef and pork going from any port in the Kingdom of Ireland'. Interestingly, those at Dublin Castle were quick to point out that the rationale behind such an embargo was as a direct result of 'the Frauds carried on by exporting provisions in Neutral ships for the use of his Majesty's enemies...' They continued by asserting that it was of paramount importance that the embargo on English merchant ships be extended to 'all his Majesty's subjects as well of Ireland as England.' In short, some English and Irish merchants were guilty of evading embargoes through the use of Neutral shipping.

One such case occurred in 1745 and involved several Dutch vessels that were involved in the Franco- Irish trade in the West Indies. The ships were seized by the British authorities and involved Peter Heyligger, the governor of St. Eustatius and inveterate supplier of the French colonies.<sup>111</sup> An associate of several members of the Irish West Indian community, Heyligger subsequently came to invest in plantations at St. Croix, and it is possible that his illegal commercial activities during the first Anglo-French war alerted Tuite to the possibilities of trading as a neutral.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Pitman, *The development of the British West Indies*, pp. 271-98.

<sup>111</sup> Pitman, *The development of the British West Indies*, p. 291.

<sup>112</sup> John Baker was in frequent communication with his associates at St. Eustatius, see for example LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 25 December 1754, fo 80.

## The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

Nicholas Tuite was among the many merchants inconvenienced by the embargoes on provisions. On one occasion, he forwarded a petition to the Duke of Newcastle for the consideration of the Privy Council at Dublin Castle. Tuite's petition involved the status of four of his ships which were lying in wait of permission to leave Ireland so as to conduct a provisioning voyage. Permission was eventually granted to Tuite 'provided they proceed under Convoy of one of his majesties ships from Ireland to Plymouth and from Plymouth under the like convoy to his Majesty's colonies and shall not desert...' The other stipulation was that they 'produce certificates of their having delivered their cargoes in the places for which they shall be entered...' <sup>113</sup> Two months later, Arnold Nesbit, on behalf of the Merchants and his correspondents in Ireland, wrote to Lord Chesterfield in order to voice concern regarding the recent embargo. Given that no convoy was stationed on the Irish coast, those merchants who complied with the conditions of the embargo, were 'obliged to continue a long time in port at a vast expense to themselves and to the great disappointment of foreign markets.'

The Admiralty's desire to prevent provisions falling into enemy hands was simply not practical when one considered that even if cargoes were delivered exactly to where they should be, 'it is no security that the French shall not avail themselves of them, for they may be re-exported to the islands of St. Eustacia and St. Thomas, or other neutral places where the enemy may be.' In his opinion, this was not a recent phenomenon as such neutral ports 'constantly hath been supplied with them.' Nesbit's dissatisfaction with the embargo was further expressed by his prediction that such embargoes did nothing but 'change the course of the Beef Trade, by transferring it from Ireland the North America...' Supplies from there were carried to the neutral Danish and Dutch islands where the French bought them up 'when they [could] not get Irish Provisions.' The resulting problem for the merchants and for the Irish Kingdom in general was that the embargo 'discourages Foreigners from relying upon the markets of Ireland...' <sup>114</sup>

If 'the foreigners' could no longer rely on the Irish provisioning industry, it is no small step to conclude that the Irish and English merchants involved in this trade also found it increasingly difficult to do so. The costs incurred while waiting in port for a convoy to escort an English merchant ship could easily soak up all but the greatest of profit margins. Similarly, the loss of flexibility imposed on the trade by the convoy system meant that cargoes were to become larger and less frequent. While in theory, this may have increased prices in the Leeward Islands, it also served to encourage a market

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<sup>113</sup> Lord Justices (Newport and Boyle) to Earl of Chesterfield, PRONI, State Papers, Ireland, Bundle 409, 27 September 1746, # 2611, fo. 33.

<sup>114</sup> Memorial of Albert Nesbitt on behalf of Irish Merchants praying that embargo may be removed, PRONI, State Papers, Ireland. Bundle 409, 3 November 1746, # 2612, fo. 33.

## The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

in North American products and contraband goods. Ideally, the victualing trade would involve the regular lading of small ships with low risk quantities of low cost provisions. Such provisions would be sold quickly at the Leeward Islands with a high profit margin. A rapid turnaround time would then ensure that profits were maximised. Unfortunately, this process was becoming increasingly expensive and cumbersome. The single loophole, which may have allowed some leeway, was the use of neutral shipping. However, this avenue was blocked by preventing all subjects of His Majesty's from conducting trade of this kind.

Despite the embargoes, Tuite continued to trade between Europe and the British Leeward Islands. Although Tuite maintained his sugar plantation at Montserrat, he also developed substantial business in London and spent a good deal of time there. For many Irish residents at the British Leeward islands, the inter-island trade in commodities and luxury items allowed many to expand their freeholds or their businesses.<sup>115</sup> In many respects, what had initially served as a survival tactic in the seventeenth century soon became a highly lucrative way of life, sustaining the Irish planting and commercial interest at the West Indies throughout the eighteenth century. Tuite and his associates thrived in this environment and by the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle 1748, Catholics still far outnumbered Protestants at Montserrat.<sup>116</sup>

The sense of security among the Irish community was to change in early 1749 when an act purporting to regulate the assembly on Montserrat endeavoured to deny Catholic suffrage. While Akenson suggests that this sudden enforcement of the Penal Laws at Montserrat was a reaction to the increasingly overt practice of the Catholic religion, it can be argued that the motivation was related as much to economic interest as to religion. 1749 was a bumper year for sugar production in the West Indies and British planters found themselves under increasing pressure as prices waned and French competition mounted. The smuggling of foreign sugars into the British market was rampant and was said to have had a negative effect on the prices of British sugars on the London exchange. So obsessed were the planters with protecting the monopoly, frequently their sole source of income, that they regularly issued pamphlets warning against the evils of foreign sugars, which were traded 'by the most flagitious race of men.'<sup>117</sup> This flagitious race included the Irish mercantile community, who conducted this semi-legal trade via the West Indian free ports and neutral islands.

The move to enact the Act of 1749 was perceived by many Catholic businessmen as the ultimate injustice. For the Irish merchants and planters, who were accepted as

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<sup>115</sup> Sheridan, *Sugar and slavery*, p. 445.

<sup>116</sup> JBTP, Vol. 9, January 1750/51 to December 1753 (London, 1932), p. 237.

<sup>117</sup> Martin, *An essay upon planterhip*, p. 3.



## The eighteenth century Irish West Indian community

educated and enlightened Gentlemen elsewhere, it was simply unacceptable. Not only did it suddenly emphasise the precarious nature of the Irish community's elevated social status on Montserrat, it was also perceived to signal the beginning of an oppressive era for Catholics in the region. Nicholas Tuite was one of the merchants particularly targeted by the act. Subject to an injunction which was taken against his trading with the Leeward Islands in 1749, Tuite's livelihood was at stake.<sup>118</sup> When the Act of 1749 was eventually appealed, its proponents were accused of succumbing to the petty politics arising from a faction between the landed and trading interest. Needless to say, this was strenuously refuted and it was claimed that given the Catholic community had overpowered the Protestant, the act was necessary to 'restrain' them.<sup>119</sup> In his own version of events, Tuite described himself as being continuously 'exposed to iniquitous treatment at the hands of capricious governors.'<sup>120</sup> Although the act was overturned in London in 1751, it was too late. Sensing that their fortunes were at the mercy of whimsical governors, many affluent Irish merchants had already relocated their operations elsewhere. Although this group of Irish merchant-planters were not overtly persecuted, the fact that they were Catholic meant that they were ultimately considered to be second class citizens.

Driven by the urge to improve which was characteristic of marginal merchants in the eighteenth century, Tuite and his associates had acquired all the trappings of Gentlemen.<sup>121</sup> Despite this, as Catholics, their status was never truly secure. In this light discriminatory legislation against the predominantly Catholic community was, for the most part, due to their commercial expertise and their perceived threat to British sugar interests. As we will see in the following chapter, the skills that this group had acquired at the British West Indies were implemented at the Danish island of St. Croix. By 1750, Tuite, Bodkin, Ryan and Baker had come to invest in what would become known as their 'Quadripartite Concern' at St. Croix. Experts in their respective fields, they represented a strong planting background and a keen knowledge of local and international trading interests. As a result of their efficient commercial and planting strategies their involvement in the Danish sugar industry was a resounding success.

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<sup>118</sup> LJB, John Baker St. Kitts to Nicholas Tuite, London, 13 October 1753, fo. 60.

<sup>119</sup> *JBTP*, Vol. 9, January 1750/51 to December 1753 (London, 1932), pp. 236-7.

<sup>120</sup> Nicholas Tuite to King Frederick V, 22 July 1754, DNA, Danske Kancelli (232), 1699-1771, '*Koncepter og indlæg til vestindiske sager, 1746-1760*,' Series: D-37-3, Folder 12.

<sup>121</sup> Hancock, *Citizens of the world*, p. 279.

## Chapter Two

### Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

In the late 1740s, Nicholas Tuite, in partnership with several of his Irish associates, purchased a large amount of land at the Danish island of St. Croix. Within a short few years, they were among the leading planters at the island and their plantations were managed with an efficiency and competence beyond all others.<sup>1</sup> Although it was a Danish island, during this period relatively few Danes were actively involved in planting at St. Croix. Instead, individuals from all nations were invited to assist in the development of the nascent Danish sugar trade. Given their extensive collective experience in planting and trading on the British sugar market, Tuite and his associates were well placed to take advantage of the opportunities presented by a frontier island such as St. Croix. Initially, the commercial potential of St. Croix was tempered by the Danish West India and Guinea Company's restrictive administration of the island. In spite of this, Tuite invested at St. Croix in the belief that the Company's reign would be short-lived. As we will see, he was correct in his estimations and in 1754, the Danish Crown moved to takeover the island from the Company as a going concern. Over the course of several years, Tuite encouraged the establishment of numerous Irish plantations at St. Croix. By assisting Irish planters and merchants of moderate means to invest at the island, Tuite gave them the opportunity to own their own land and to become active participants within the Atlantic sugar trade. Through careful management and access to international markets, these plantations soon recouped their initial investment. So successful were the plantations, that Tuite was inspired to imagine an Irish Catholic haven at the island where settlers from Ireland and the British West Indies could settle, establish plantations, become equal and participating members of the local community and, most importantly, trade in peace.<sup>2</sup>

#### **St. Croix under Company rule**

The basis for a viable sugar industry was achieved in 1733 with the Company's purchase of St. Croix. Although the Company had failed to encourage a vibrant sugar

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<sup>1</sup> Within two years of their arrival, some of Tuite's associates had cleared more land at the island than in the previous fifteen years combined see, LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 January 1750/51, fo. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Tuite to King Frederick V Copenhagen, 22 July 1754, Danske Kancelli (232), '*Koncepter og indlæg til vestindiske sager, 1746-1760*,' Series: D37-3, folder 12, no folio number.

## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

trade at St. John's or at St. Thomas, it was decided to reinvigorate its fortunes through a thorough programme of reorganisation.<sup>3</sup> The Company was issued with a new charter which allowed it special privileges to establish a sugar refinery and distillery at Copenhagen. Private sugar refiners were forbidden to import foreign sugars.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, shares in the islands and the refineries were merged into a joint stock company and all old shares in the Company were renegotiated. Having established a monopoly on refining, the company also benefited from substantial commercial protection from the state. This led to very close ties between the trading and refining interests of Copenhagen, which was responsible for the growing opposition to the Company which became prevalent in the late 1740s. In all, the success of the Danish sugar refining industry was heavily influenced by the vagaries of commercial conditions during this time. Direct trade with the West Indies was vigorously supported by the government. A keen supporter of this was C.A. Plessen, the director of the West Indian company from 1733 to 1750. Despite the recession of the 1740s, the Industry developed to an impressive size and provided for domestic consumption.<sup>5</sup>

Once it had acquired the island, the Company immediately set about dividing it into workable sections. Contemporary maps of the island depict a very neat grid formation which was set out in three hundred regular rectangles.<sup>6</sup> Each rectangle represented what was considered to be the optimum area for a sugar plantation – a plantation of land measuring two thousand by three thousand Danish feet.<sup>7</sup> The island was also divided into nine quarters, East End A, East End B, Company Quarter, Queen's Quarter, King's Quarter, Prince's Quarter and The West End. Land on the northern coast, which was the last to be settled, was divided into Northside A and B. The best land, thought to have been in the King's, Queen's and Prince's Quarters, was selected for sugar planting. Other parcels of land, those which were prone to drought or had little cultivatable land, were deemed fit for the production of cotton. Cotton plantations were frequently located in coastal areas where topography was irregular and where climatic conditions were unsuitable for the cultivation of sugar.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Erik Gøbel, 'Volume and structure of Danish shipping', p. 108.

<sup>4</sup> Westergaard, *The Danish West Indies*, p. 213.

<sup>5</sup> Sveistrup and Willerslev, *Den Danske sukkerhandels*, p. 352.

<sup>6</sup> This is particularly evident in Beck's map of 1754 see, Beck, J.M *Tilforladelige Kort over Eylandet St. Croix udi America*. (Copenhagen, 1754 with amendments in 1766) Department of Maps, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

<sup>7</sup> The Danish foot was equal to 31.407 cm as opposed to the British foot, which is 30.48 cm. See Astrid Friis and Kristof Glamann, *A history of prices and wages in Denmark* (London and New York, 1958), p. 119.

<sup>8</sup> L. Larsen, L. Mygh, I. Thomsen, S. Winther-Petersen, 'Sukkerplantager i Dansk Vestindien Saint Croix', in O. Hornby and O. Justesen, eds., *Studier i de Dansk-Vestindiske Øers Historie 1665-1976, Memorandum fra Institute for økonomisk historie ved Københavns universitet, Nr. 4* (Copenhagen, 1976), p. 205.

## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

From the beginning, the Company found it difficult to encourage settlers to St. Croix and was forced to pursue a policy of ‘colonisation by invitation.’<sup>9</sup> The majority of the families from neighbouring islands, who resided at St. Croix before it became a Danish possession, opted to remain and pay a nominal fee to the Company. Aside from the influx of European settlers from St. John and St. Thomas, there were few interested in travelling directly from Europe to take up a plantation.<sup>10</sup> Despite attempts to acquire hardworking and diligent settlers, several German families were offered plantations, but they proved to be entirely unsuitable. With the newly enforced *Stavnsbåd*, the Danish peasantry were simply not available to venture to the West Indies.<sup>11</sup> In addition to the insufficient numbers of settlers, of greater concern was their calibre. This was questionable at best and led to their being described as ‘an idle, tricking, and ignorant Set of People, who had made but little Progress in Cultivation; the chief Article of Production, which [was] Sugar, not amounting to 1000 Hogsheads per Ann.’<sup>12</sup> There remained a shortage of skilled planters who were prepared to invest the capital required to purchase, and the knowledge required to maintain a plantation. As a result, the Danish authorities came to look beyond the Kingdom of Denmark for a ready supply of settlers who were both willing and, most importantly, able to survive and prosper in a frontier environment.

Following the purchase of St. Croix, The Danish West Indies and Guinea Company struggled to meet the demands of its shareholders in Copenhagen, together with the needs of its planters at the Danish islands. While on the one hand, the shareholders desired sustained returns on their investments, on the other, planters at St. Croix were tiring of the low prices paid by the refiners for their sugar.<sup>13</sup> Suffering financial difficulties in 1747, and amid sustained complaints from the planters, the Company opted to renegotiate its shares with a view to increasing its overall value. In doing so, it amalgamated the assets of the stockholders with those of private business interests.<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, shareholders were requested to reinvest in the company and failure to do so would result in the forfeit of any stock they had acquired since the purchase of St. Croix in 1733. Having already invested heavily in the venture, many of the shareholders agreed under duress to advance more money to the floundering company. A fixed rate of

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<sup>9</sup> Hall, *Slave society in the Danish West Indies*, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Westergaard, *The Danish West Indies*, p. 215-16.

<sup>11</sup> The Danish Crown introduced the *Stavnsbåd* in the 1730s. It applied to all peasants between the ages of nine and forty and served to formalise the tenant’s position as property of the landowner. By enacting this law, the Crown partially solved the country’s agricultural crisis by ensuring a supply of cheap labour would be guaranteed into the future, see R. Nisbet Bain, *Scandinavia: a political history of Denmark, Norway and Sweden from 1513 to 1900* (Cambridge, 1905), p. 399.

<sup>12</sup> Obituary of Nicholas Tuite, *The Public Advertiser*, 3 April 1773.

<sup>13</sup> Svestrup and Willerslev, *Den Danske sukkerhandels*, p. 40.

<sup>14</sup> Westergaard, *The Danish West Indies*, p. 221.

## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

two thousand rixdollars ensured the safety of their stock and also entitled them to four standard sized plantations at the island. This equated to six hundred Danish acres and many of the shareholders opted to cut their losses and to sell their plantations immediately.<sup>15</sup> Others decided to keep their land and attempted to establish viable sugar plantations. However, given the large investment required to establish and maintain a plantation, together with the fact that shareholders had already paid dearly for their land, many chose to do nothing.<sup>16</sup> By choosing this option, they took advantage of the rise in property prices which was taking place throughout the West Indian region.<sup>17</sup>

The Company's renegotiation of its stock had two unintended consequences. The first was that it effectively discouraged shareholders from producing sugar at St. Croix. Despite the fact that the Company fixed the rate of a standard plantation at the price of five hundred rixdollars, land speculation was rife and many plantations were re-sold for prices well in excess of this.<sup>18</sup> If one possessed a plantation, it made more financial sense to do nothing so as to allow rising property prices increase its value, rather to invest in the production of sugar. As a result, the company continued to struggle to meet its commitments while potential sugar producing plantations lay uncultivated. Meanwhile, shareholders and unscrupulous intermediaries who persisted in the practice of land speculation, made large profits.<sup>19</sup> During the period between 1747 and 1755, the speculative market for land and the lucrative profits to be made from doing nothing did not make sugar planting at St. Croix an economically attractive option for Danish shareholders.

The second consequence of the renegotiation of Company stock was that the shareholders who eventually chose to sell their land, frequently found foreign buyers. This had an impact on the cultural landscape of the island for generations to come. Faced with an impossible situation, the Company directors welcomed any skilled planters who were willing to relocate themselves, their expertise and, most importantly, capital to the island. This appears to have been the experience of Nicholas Tuite when he

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<sup>15</sup> A plantation at St. Croix was equal to 2000 by 3000 Danish feet or 6,000,000 Danish square feet. This was equivalent to approximately 147 British Acres. With the influx of British settlers, land came to be sold in British acres. As a result, the term *Agre* was devised to avoid confusion and a plantation came to represent 150 Danish *Agres*. The Danish measure was devised specifically for St. Croix and it allowed for the simplification of the calculation of Royal taxes. In all, it differed from the British standard acre by about one acre in every fifty or, as Hopkins calculates, 'a strip of almost sixty feet wide running a thousand yards, the length of a plantation.' See, Daniel Hopkins, 'The eighteenth-century invention of a measure in the Caribbean: the Danish acre of St. Croix', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 18 (1992), pp. 158-73, p. 167.

<sup>16</sup> Jens Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien, 1755-1848*, p. 91.

<sup>17</sup> By the mid-eighteenth century, land at the British West Indies had become increasingly scarce. As a result, prices there rose exponentially. This had the effect of driving up property prices across the region, see Ove Hornby, *Kolonierne i Vestindien* (Copenhagen, 1980), p. 127.

<sup>18</sup> Jens Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien, 1755-1848*, p. 98.

<sup>19</sup> Reimert Haagenen also discusses the phenomenon of land speculation at St. Croix in his *Beskrivelse over Eylandet St. Croix i America i Vest-Indien*, Copenhagen, 1758. p. 52

## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

first approached Governor Clausen at St. Croix in 1749.<sup>20</sup> Having recently relocated from Montserrat to London in order to establish himself as a West Indian Agent, Tuite was clearly in a position to offer the Company the advantages of his mercantile and financial experience. What transpired as a result of this meeting was the establishment of several Irish sugar plantations at the island, which were financed both directly and indirectly, by Nicholas Tuite.

### **Nicholas Tuite and the early Irish plantations at St. Croix**

The key to Nicholas Tuite's success at St. Croix was not just his ability to manage the production of sugar, but also his ability to coordinate the aspects of the Atlantic sugar trade that pertained directly to his operations in the West Indies. It was not enough to simply produce a high quality product. In order to gain an advantage over one's competitors, it was necessary to manage every aspect of the business and to do so more efficiently than anyone else. It was essential that provisions, tools, equipment, labour and land were of the highest quality, but yet purchased as cheaply as possible. In addition, a choice of markets in varying locations was required to ensure that the plantation produce was sent to the market where the highest price could be secured.<sup>21</sup>

This required a very high degree of specialisation in all aspects of the sugar trade and as we will see, Tuite did not operate alone. Indeed, he and his associates established several thriving plantations in spite of the restrictive policies that characterised the Company's management of St. Croix.

Despite the success of the renegotiation of 1747, the Company's fortunes did not improve to any great degree. Although the Company was initially a positive influence over the development of the Danish islands, in 1776 Adam Smith described how it had eventually come to stifle the island's economic development,

not only had the power of oppressing them, but the greatest temptation to do so...the government of an exclusive company of merchants is, perhaps, the worst of all governments for any county whatever...<sup>22</sup>

At the time of his first purchase, Tuite was well aware of the negative aspects of establishing a business under Company rule. Monopolies and restrictive trading policies were not conducive to a thriving and profitable plantation. However Tuite invested in St.

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<sup>20</sup> Nicholas Tuite to King Frederick V Copenhagen, 22 July 1754, DNA, Danske Kancelli (232), '*Koncepter og indlæg til vestindiske sager, 1746-1760*,' Series: D37-3, folder 12, no folio number.

<sup>21</sup> See Ward on this point, J. R. Ward, 'The profitability of sugar planting in the British West Indies, 1650-1834', *The Economic History Review*, 2(1978), pp. 197-213.

<sup>22</sup> Adam Smith, *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations* (2 vols., Oxford, 1976), ii, p. 570.

## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

Croix on the strength of reliable information that the island was soon to be taken over by Frederick V, the King of Denmark.<sup>23</sup> The Danish Crown recognised the potential of St. Croix and rather than allow the island's sugar trade to falter at the hands of the Company, plans were afoot to buy out the company and to bring the island under the direct control of the Danish government. It was generally believed that this would lead to improved commercial conditions at the islands as the Company monopoly was replaced by a more liberal regime. Tuite knew that once this occurred, property prices at the island would increase dramatically as St. Croix became one of the few sugar producing islands in the region that enjoyed the protection of a neutral state. Given its strategic location, this would mean that the island would have superb potential as a Freeport. This in turn would provide many lucrative opportunities for well-established and well-connected planters and merchants who were based at St. Croix. The takeover had yet to be finalised however. By taking the risk to invest in a potentially ruinous operation, and by encouraging other Irish planters and merchants to do likewise, Tuite was instrumental in the development of the colony, and the Danish sugar industry.

### **Cartographic representation of Irish plantations at St. Croix**

A map that has come to be associated with the frontier phase of St. Croix is one that dates to 1754. Composed by J. M. Beck in the early 1750s, this map depicts land ownership patterns and as such is cadastral in nature. Amended in 1766 to include additional information, it serves as an invaluable resource in the study of the island's community as it was at the end of the Seven Years' War.<sup>24</sup> An earlier map, composed by Cronenberg and Jaegersberg in 1750, has received less attention. This map dates to the final years of the Company's administration of St. Croix and it gives a remarkable overview of the island as it was in the late 1740s.<sup>25</sup> Painted in watercolours, the map depicts each plantation with remarkable detail. In addition, it shows the amount of land under cultivation at this time and also gives an idea of the numbers, sizes and physical orientation of the buildings associated with the islands' plantations. Infrastructure, such as roads and harbours, are also featured.<sup>26</sup> What is particularly striking is the fact that the earlier map gives an impression of conditions at St. Croix during its frontier phase, the period during which Nicholas Tuite and his associates made their first investments.

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<sup>23</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 January 1750/51, fo. 29.

<sup>24</sup> Beck, J.M *Tilforladelige Kort over Eylandet St. Croix udi America*. (Copenhagen, 1754 with amendments in 1766) Department of Maps, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

<sup>25</sup> J. Cronenberg and J. Jægersberg, *Charte over Eilandet St. Croix*, manuscript map, No. A/18-49, Nautical Charts Department Archive, Copenhagen.

<sup>26</sup> This map has been studied in great detail by Hopkins, see Hopkins, 'An extraordinary eighteenth-century map', pp. 44-58.

## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

Tuite was involved in the purchase and management of numerous plantations at the island. His own personal venture was a plantation located at Sion Farm. As we will see, by 1750 this was a thriving operation. Following this, Tuite became involved with Henry Ryan, Lawrence Bodkin and John Baker in the purchasing of numerous tracts of undeveloped land. This operation came to be known as the 'Quadripartite Concern' and also proved to be a very lucrative investment. If not a direct investor in an Irish plantation, Tuite's firm in London often came to provide financial services, to supply planters and merchants with manufactures and also gave them access to competitive freight and insurance rates. As an agent, Tuite was often the first port of call for many settlers seeking advice about how best to proceed at the Danish island. This is evident in relation to Plessen's Plantation which was managed independently of Tuite by John Baker and the Ryan brothers, William and Henry. This section will briefly examine Sion Farm, Concordia, Richmond and Plessen's plantations. In doing so, it will consider the factors that encouraged their development.

### **Sion Farm**

Tuite's first plantation at St. Croix was located at Sion Farm. This was at Queen's Quarter, numbers twenty six and twenty seven and his name appears on the Cronenberg map of 1750. (Figure 2a). Tuite's brother-in-law John Bradshaw was in partnership with him and was also involved in the subsequent purchase of an adjoining two plantations, which they named Sion Hill (Queen's Quarter, Number twenty two and twenty three). In 1750, Sion Farm was represented on Cronenberg's map as being almost entirely under cultivation. Although much of plantation twenty six is missing from the map, Cronenberg's depiction of twenty seven shows sugar works, a mill, and a Great House. Seven slave huts are positioned in an orderly fashion around the perimeter of a courtyard. Given the fact that the plantation is not accessible by road or stream, Tuite appears to have acquired a narrow corridor of land, at its south west corner, which leads to a main thoroughfare. Sion Farm was the pride and joy of Tuite who was keen to show it off at any opportunity.<sup>27</sup> Depicted as a fully functioning plantation in the late 1740s, Tuite's purchase of Sion Farm appears to have been a worthwhile investment.

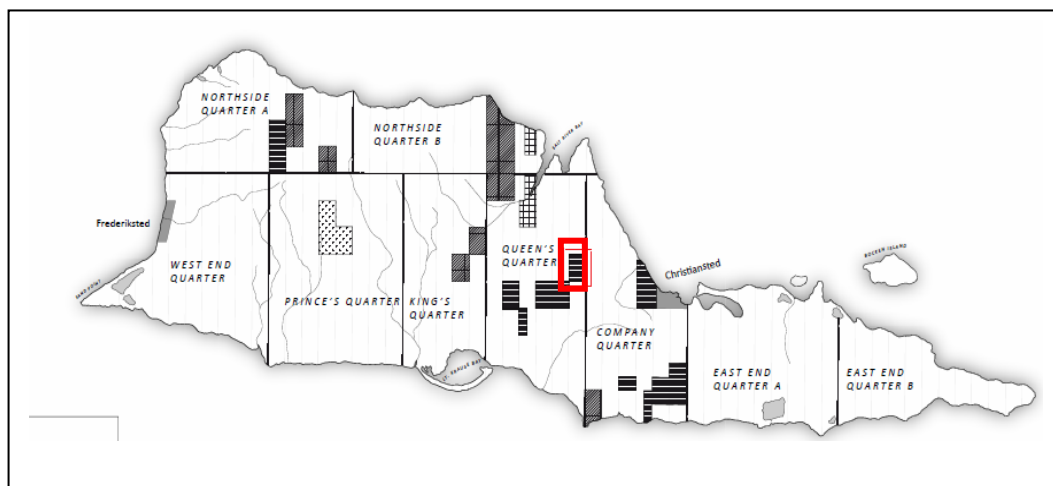
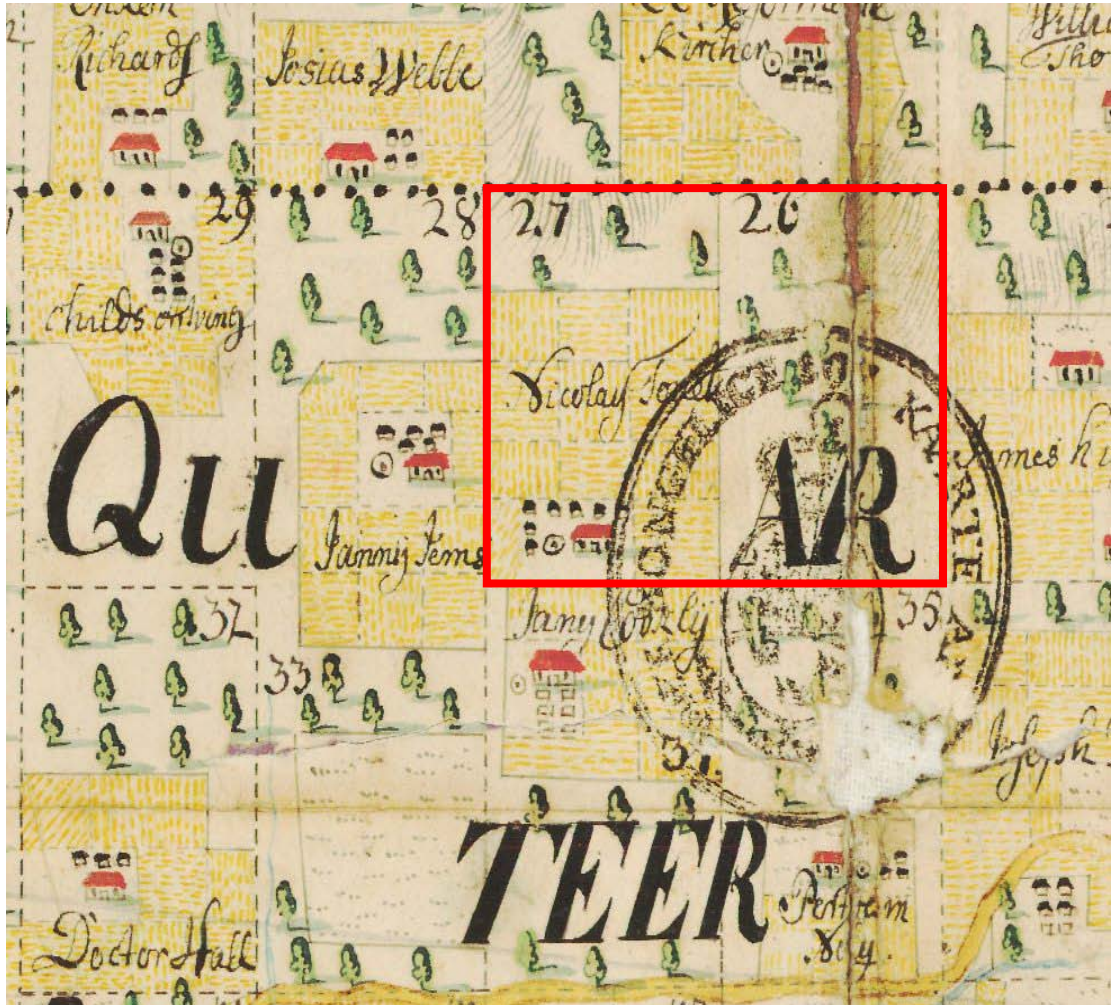
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<sup>27</sup> See Nicholas Tuite, London to Henry Hunt, St. Croix, 16 December 1763, KB, Manuscript division, NKS 1343 II, 2°.



Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

**Figure 2a:** Sion Farm, outlined in red.  
This was Nicholas Tuite's (annotated 'Nicholay Touet')  
first plantation at St. Croix.  
Cronenberg & Jægersburg, 1750.



Sion Farm on outline of St. Croix

Following the success of Sion Farm, Tuite was keen to seize the opportunities presented by the island and to encourage other members of the Irish community to join him. A large island in comparison to Montserrat, St. Croix offered what the British island could not – vast tracts of affordable, fertile soil. By this time the Company continued to manage the island yet found itself in financial difficulty.

So eager was it to settle the island, widely renowned for its unhealthy climate, that it offered incentives to all comers, irrespective of suitability or experience. As one commentator remarked, ‘this allured all the ragamuffins, insolvents and people of desperate fortunes.’ Although managed efficiently, the future of the island’s sugar industry remained uncertain due to the absence of a definitive business strategy. Another disadvantage was the general lack of the settlers’ expertise in planting and marketing of sugar, which continued to hamper the island’s development. Despite the abundance of rich, virgin soil that supported dense forests, the island simply failed to thrive. As a result, land prices were a fraction of those of the Leeward Islands and the Danes became increasingly keen to attract knowledgeable planters and merchants, together with their families, in order to create a viable and prosperous community.<sup>28</sup>

Throughout the subsequent decade, Tuite encouraged many Irish planters and merchants to relocate from the British islands to St. Croix. Among the first of these were Lawrence Bodkin, Henry Ryan and John Baker. In 1750, along with Tuite, they formed what Baker frequently referred to as a ‘Quadripartite Concern.’ Although Tuite was already an established international merchant of note, he could not have conducted his experiment at St. Croix alone. Each partner represented a particular area of expertise and ensured that the entire operation could be conducted in-house. Tuite acted as the agent in London and Baker saw to legal matters at the islands. Bodkin was responsible for both local trade and international commerce at St. Croix, meanwhile Ryan served as the planter-overseer. Strategic positioning within the British Empire and the Danish allowed the four to take advantage of commercial situations as they arose.

All experts in their respective fields, with strong planting and trading backgrounds, these four associates invested in plantations at St. Croix with a view to recouping their money within a relatively short period of time. As described in Chapter one, John Baker documented many aspects of the Irish West Indian community’s involvement at St. Croix. Focussing primarily on the business and commercial aspects of their operations, Baker was enthusiastic regarding the potential of the island. Although he spoke little of Bodkin other than to describe his general activities on St. Croix, it is clear that he

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<sup>28</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 January 1750/51, fo. 29.

## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

believed him to be a merchant of note and experience, 'Mr. Bodkin, who was bred a merchant, lives at Richmond...near the town to buy and sell etc.' Meanwhile Henry Ryan, who was 'an exceedingly skilful planter' and lived at St. Croix, also had a specific role to play in the venture.<sup>29</sup> A man of experience, Ryan's knowledge of the business of planting caused Baker to state, 'He is a modest, discreet man and by no means of a too sanguine disposition, under-rating, as I plainly see, all our concerns and views.'<sup>30</sup>

With Ryan and Bodkin in a position to conduct the business on-site, Baker disclosed his reliance on inter-island and trans-Atlantic communications when he remarked that 'Mr. Tuite and I are to serve the concern as we can wherever we are.' Baker's legal knowledge, contacts and access to pertinent information regarding the British islands, matched Tuite's knowledge of the London market and his access to high level information regarding the Danish islands. This arrangement allowed Baker to 'watch the matter here and do all that is to be done in this place, Mr. Tuite is to procure advantageous things in England, and the other two manage on the spot.'<sup>31</sup> An awareness of the importance of each partner's role is evident. However, having two representatives on the island was seen as essential to the functioning of the whole operation, 'tis so precarious and so merely depending on two particular people, viz Mr. Bodkin and my brother-in-law- Mr. Henry Ryan, that were they dead or to quit it, I would at once renounce it and sell out...'<sup>32</sup>

In this case, the utilization of a partnership allowed individuals of moderate means to take part in the sugar business. Baker was well aware that he was 'indebted and obligated' to Tuite, who it appears bore more than his share of the investment. As a result of this strategy, Tuite ensured loyalty and trust amongst his associates. It was no act of charity however, as Tuite's overall objective was to invest in a plantation with a view to its appreciating in value over a short period of time. The planter, who had received Tuite's assistance, could then repay him with ease. Indeed, Tuite continually sought additional Irish individuals to migrate to the island.<sup>33</sup> His success allowed him to become directly involved in the development of the island and eventually caused him in 1760 to be recognised by the King of Denmark as the 'principal planter' at St. Croix.<sup>34</sup>

When investing in their Quadripartite Concern, Bodkin, Ryan, Baker and Tuite were well aware of the fact that, 'a sugar plantation is the most expensive kind of estate' and

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<sup>29</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 January 1750/51, fo. 29.

<sup>30</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 12 August 1751, fo. 35.

<sup>31</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 January 1750/51, fo. 29.

<sup>32</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 8 Oct 1751, fo. 37.

<sup>33</sup> Several individuals mentioned the pivotal role played by Nicholas Tuite in establishing themselves at St. Croix, see for example 'Will of Francis Finn, Merchant, St. Croix', Confirmed: 17 June 1765, Proved: 12 April 1773, TNA, PROB, 11/987 [Image 37].

<sup>34</sup> 'Obituary of Nicholas Tuite', *The Public Advertiser*, April 3 1773.

## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

that its success depended primarily on the efficiency of its managers.<sup>35</sup> It was common practice elsewhere to employ resident planters, overseers and sugar merchants to sustain production, to manage labour and expenditure, together with the critical business of shipping to foreign markets.<sup>36</sup> Tuite's business model, on the other hand, mirrored that expounded by William Watson who advocated mutual reward and friendship as being the ties that sustained a good business partnership.<sup>37</sup>

Baker had been investigating the possibility of investing in a plantation but had found that plantation land at the British islands were 'too dear[sic] for a man of my fortune.' Although land prices had risen exponentially at St. Croix in the previous few years, they still remained significantly cheaper than those at the Leeward Islands. This allowed Tuite and his associates to purchase over one thousand acres for ten thousand pounds sterling. At ten pounds per acre, Baker's excitement was palpable when he exclaimed, 'you will hardly believe the terms of the purchase when I tell you how easy and advantageous they are, it looks like a dream.'<sup>38</sup> In Jamaica during this period, one acre of sugar producing land cost in the region of sixteen pounds sterling.<sup>39</sup> Thus the six pounds difference was enough to make the investment a very lucrative one indeed.

### Concordia

Planning to purchase a cluster of cheap plantations as a syndicate, the associates were aware of the potential for property to rapidly increase in value given the prevailing rumours circulating about the Crown's imminent takeover. In this way, they applied the skills they had learned as marginal planters at Montserrat where an average plantation was mountainous and difficult to access. If we look at Cronenberg's map of 1750, it becomes clear that the land under cultivation at this time was primarily in lowland locations and that the mountainous regions had yet to be exploited. Such areas were so heavily forested that they were virtually impenetrable and as such eluded official surveys until well into the 1760s. Accordingly, the heavily wooded areas were disregarded by many planters who believed it to be of poor quality. Thus, an individual who was prepared to purchase such land could do so at a far lower price than that which was easily accessible and sparsely vegetated. Familiar with such areas, Tuite, Baker, Bodkin and Ryan purchased plantations from the Company at the north side.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Samuel Martin, *An essay upon planteriship, humbly inscrib'd to all the planters of the British sugar-colonies in America* (Antigua, 1750), p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Pares, 'Merchants and Planters', p. 43.

<sup>37</sup> William Watson, *A treatise of the law of partnership...* (London, 1794), p. 131.

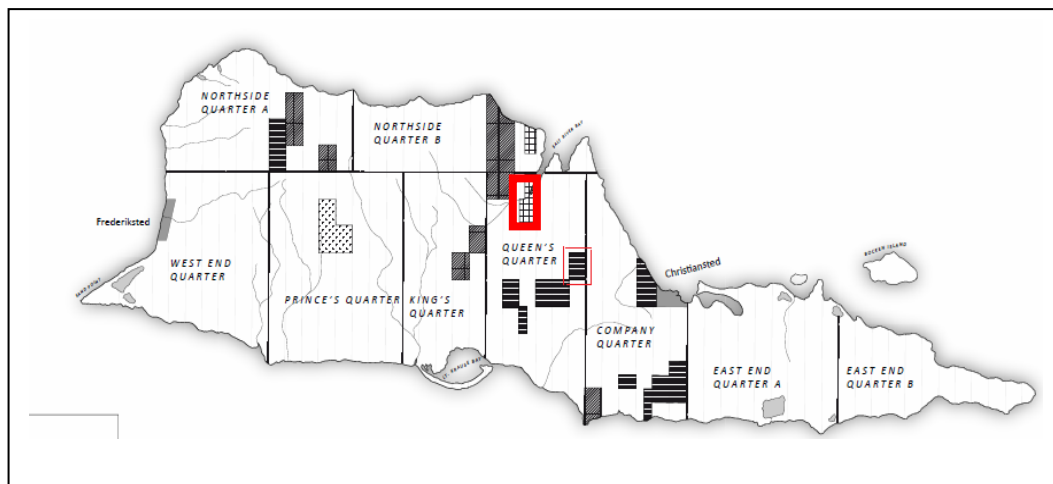
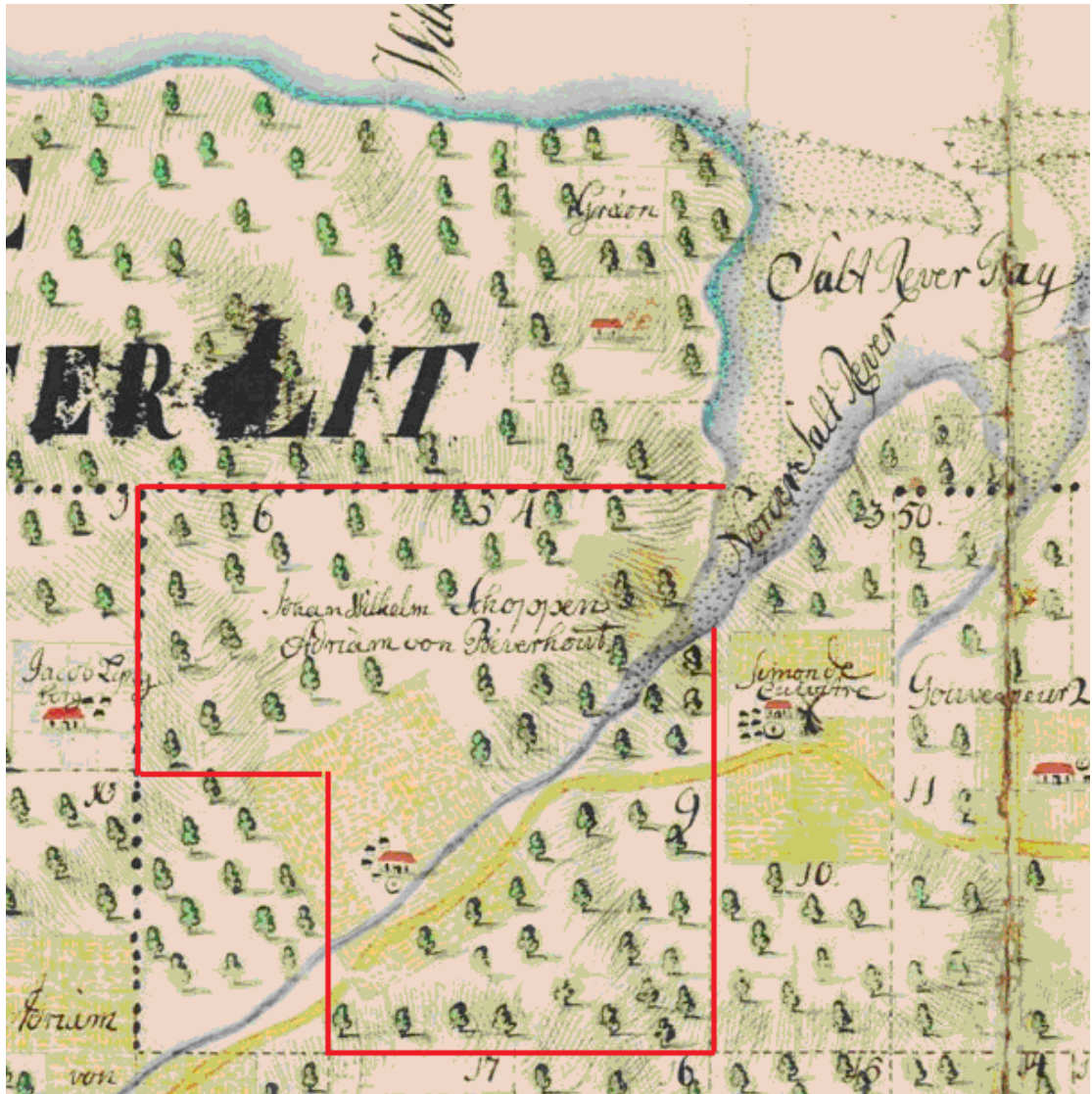
<sup>38</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 January 1750/51, fo. 29.

<sup>39</sup> Richard B. Sheridan, 'The wealth of Jamaica in the eighteenth century,' *The Economic History Review*, 18(1965), pp. 292-311, p. 302.

<sup>40</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 22 June 1751, fo. 33.

# Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

**Figure 2b:** Concordia, outlined in red.  
Cronenberg & Jægersburg, 1750.



Location of Concordia on an outline map of St. Croix

## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

These plantations were secured for ‘£60 current money a piece’ because they were ‘were thought bad land.’ It subsequently transpired however, that this land was ‘the very finest land of all’ and a year later, Baker mused ‘they sell for 600£ a piece.’<sup>41</sup> Because of the scarcity of land at Montserrat, together with the fact that much of the land at that British island was mountainous, it is no surprise that the four were well-equipped to deal with mountainous land at St. Croix. As a result, given the extent of land speculation, it was entirely possible to turn an average property into a veritable gold mine by ‘clearing 3 or 4 acres and putting up a little hut...’<sup>42</sup> Accordingly, the four associates minimised their initial investments by focussing their resources on undeveloped property. Their two main plantations were Concordia and Richmond. As Concordia was less developed than the latter, they ensured that this land was situated within a short distance from a functioning sugar works which they also purchased with a view to sharing it between them.

Baker described his purchases at St. Croix in great detail. A cursory glance at Cronenberg’s map of 1750 (Figure 2b), shows a group of six plantations known as Concordia which were located in the Queen’s Quarter and were numbered four to nine. The site of nine hundred Danish Acres was originally owned by Wilhelm Schopen and Adrian Von Beverhoudt, both of whom were Company shareholders. After managing the plantation together for some time, they had a disagreement and opted to sell their joint concern.<sup>43</sup> Overall, the area was well serviced by road and by river and there appears to have been easy access to Salt River Bay. The sugar works and buildings were built next to the river, not to the road, which gives an insight into the primacy of water transport during the period. Around one hundred and fifty Danish Acres were already under cultivation but the rest of the site was heavily forested.

However, Baker’s Irish consortium did not buy all six plantations. Instead, they bought seven hundred and fifty acres or five standard plantations at Concordia. Located in the Queen’s Quarter, they were plantation numbers four, five, six, eight and nine (See figure 2b, outlined in red). According to the cartouche associated with Beck’s map of 1754, John Baker was in possession of plantation five, Bodkin owned plantation six and Ryan was the listed as the owner of plantation nine. On this map, plantation four was listed as being available for purchase.<sup>44</sup> However, in a subsequent census of 1759, Nicholas Tuite was said to have purchased it several years before and so, it can be

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<sup>41</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 January 1750/51, fo. 29.

<sup>42</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 January 1750/51, fo. 29.

<sup>43</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 January 1750/51, fo. 29.

<sup>44</sup> Beck, J.M *Tilforladelige Kort over Eylandet St. Croix udi America*. (Copenhagen, 1754 with amendments in 1766) Department of Maps, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

considered as an oversight by Beck.<sup>45</sup> Given that Baker described sugar works at Concordia, along with '100 acres cleared...the other 650 acres being in woods...' <sup>46</sup> it can be deduced that at this time, the concern was also in possession of plantation number eight.

Accordingly Cronenberg's map depicts with great detail the attributes of the land when the consortium bought the area in 1750. For instance, plantation four was virtually undeveloped and entirely in woods. It possessed a north-westerly facing, steep valley whose slopes ran towards the Salt River. A large road clipped it at its south east corner and there were no buildings of any kind. Similarly, Baker's plantation five also had north westerly facing slopes running towards the Salt River, however it appears to have had no access to the river or to any roads. Overall, plantation five had approximately one sixth of its area cleared and cultivated in a triangular shape towards the south. The rest, at this point, was in woods. Like plantation four, it did not possess any plantation buildings of its own. Plantation six belonged to Laurence Bodkin and, in keeping with the previous two plantations, was heavily forested. Approximately two thirds of the plantation was dominated by an Easterly facing slope and a tiny area (c.1/24) was cultivated at its North East corner. There were no plantation buildings of any kind at this site.

It is unclear why plantation seven was not purchased by the consortium as it had good access to the river and main road. Although it was mainly in woods, around one fifth of its land had been cleared and cultivated at its boundary to the north east. Henry Ryan's plantation nine had marginal access to the river at its north west corner. It also had access to a road which ran south west to north east across the northerly third of the plantation. Ryan's plantation was also predominantly in woods and its south westerly facing slopes dominated two thirds of the entire lot. Towards the south east corner, there are north easterly facing slopes which form part of the Salt River Valley. At least a third of the plantation's area is at a particularly high altitude. Again, there were no plantation buildings at this plantation.

The key to the entire operation lay with plantation number eight. As described above, it possessed solid plantation buildings and several slave huts. It also had a mill and its courtyard was strategically situated beside the river and the main road. While none of the other plantations seem to have been developed to any great extent, the fact that they possessed sugar works and that land was already cultivated, meant that they could start production immediately as they began to clear the rest of the land. A true co-operative

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<sup>45</sup> Transcript of the cadastral survey of 1759, Generaltoldkammeret-ældre del Vestindisk-guineisk renteskriverkontor, 1690 – 1767 (365), ' *Om Vestindien*', Series: 411. no folio.

<sup>46</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 January 1750/51, fo. 29.

## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

arrangement, all four appear to have helped each other in whatever way they could, for the good of the overall enterprise. In all, they purchased fifty African slaves with Concordia and had within a few months, added a further one hundred and fifty.<sup>47</sup>

The plantation works and buildings in plantation eight, together with the area under cultivation (represented by a yellow rectangle), appear to be at a curious angle. If we observe the relief as depicted by Cronenberg, we can appreciate that the perfectly rectangular plantation is oriented to fit just between the hilly crevasses which frame it. This would suggest that the previous owners of the plantation were not equipped to exploit hilly and difficult areas. Indeed, Baker questioned their expertise in sugar planting as he commented that the sugar canes growing on the plantation were not of good quality, 'The Danes who left this crop on the Ground are poor planted...'<sup>48</sup>

Before the production of sugar could commence, plantation land needed to be cleared of the trees and mangroves that were so prevalent at the island. One of Baker's chief concerns was that the island was sickly and had claimed the lives of many settlers there. However, he was certain that, with the clearance of the land, the 'noxious particulars' in the soil, which he believed to be the cause of such sickliness, would be eradicated promptly.<sup>49</sup> Initially, the felling of forests at St. Croix, as in Denmark, was seen as a positive step towards achieving open pasture and very fertile soil. Baker described this phenomenon in a letter when he described the island's rapid development, 'Tis a beautiful country and the walks in the woods very delightfull and romantick but all this will vanish when the woods are felled which is doing very fast...'<sup>50</sup> Indeed, as seen above, the clearing of a plantation immediately increased its value.<sup>51</sup> At St. Croix, the mountainous regions, with their thick foliage, possessed soil with a large amount of nitrogenous humus which was responsible for the tremendous fertility of the land. This fertility, once a feature of the Leeward Islands, had been long since stripped by intensive cultivation of sugar cane at the older colonies.

During this period, the British Leeward Islands suffered from soil exhaustion and production was heavily reliant on manure and fertilizers. Samuel Martin of Antigua, author of the popular *An Essay on Plantership*, dedicated several pages both to the therapeutic nature of manure and to the various methods of applying it to the land. The dependence on fertilization due to soil exhaustion was labour intensive and costly, yet considered to be an essential component of Leeward Island plantership, 'But every

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<sup>47</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 January 1750/51, fo. 29.

<sup>48</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 January 1750/51, fo. 29.

<sup>49</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 January 1750/51, fo. 29. It is likely that this 'sickliness' was due to the Malarial parasite, which thrives in wet and swampy conditions. This continued to be a problem at St. Croix well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century see, Earl B. Shaw, 'St. Croix's rainiest year causes an epidemic of malaria', *Science*, 76 (1932), pp. 566-7.

<sup>50</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 January 1750/51, fo. 29.

<sup>51</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 8 October 1751, fo. 37.



## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

planter should be more particularly a very skilful husbandman; because upon the right culture of his soil depends absolutely the *quality*, and in a great measure the *quantity* also of his produce.’<sup>52</sup>

At the outset, the plantations at St. Croix did not require any additional fertilizer. Such was the fertility of the soil that the planters were familiar with the practice of ‘ratooning’. This was where, on cutting the sugarcane, the remaining stump (the ratoon) was left in the ground to re-sprout, producing a second cane.<sup>53</sup> In virgin soil, such as at St. Croix, ratooning continued to produce high quality canes for up to ten years after the first crop, and was considerably less labour intensive than planting anew every year.<sup>54</sup> On the Leeward Islands of the 1750s, the use of ratoons was a thing of the past and dependence on fertilizer planting there far more costly. The Quadripartite Concern, whose canes were all in ratoons, clearly had an advantage over any other plantation on an established island. More importantly, due to the fact that they planted ‘in a manner and to a perfection beyond anybody there...’ they had a considerable advantage over their counterparts at St. Croix.<sup>55</sup>

### Richmond

The next group of plantations purchased by the consortium went under the name of Richmond (Figure 2c). In 1750, the land at Concordia was very different to that at Richmond, the latter being in many respects a more mature plantation. The census of 1759 records how it changed hands on several occasions since the island had come into Danish possession. Composed of plantations Number one and two in the Company Quarter, Laurence Bodkin & Company purchased it from Jens Beck on behalf of the Quadripartite on 14 September 1750 and it was one of the few plantations at St. Croix which was not evenly divided into a 150 Danish Acre lots. An irregular allotment with a coastal boundary running in a north-westerly direction, it was located directly to the west of the town of Christiansted. In all, it was comprised of one plantation of fifteen hundred feet by four thousand feet. In addition to this, the irregular coastline was estimated at an additional one million square feet.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Samuel Martin, *An essay upon plantership*, p. vii.

<sup>53</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 June 1751, fo. 33.

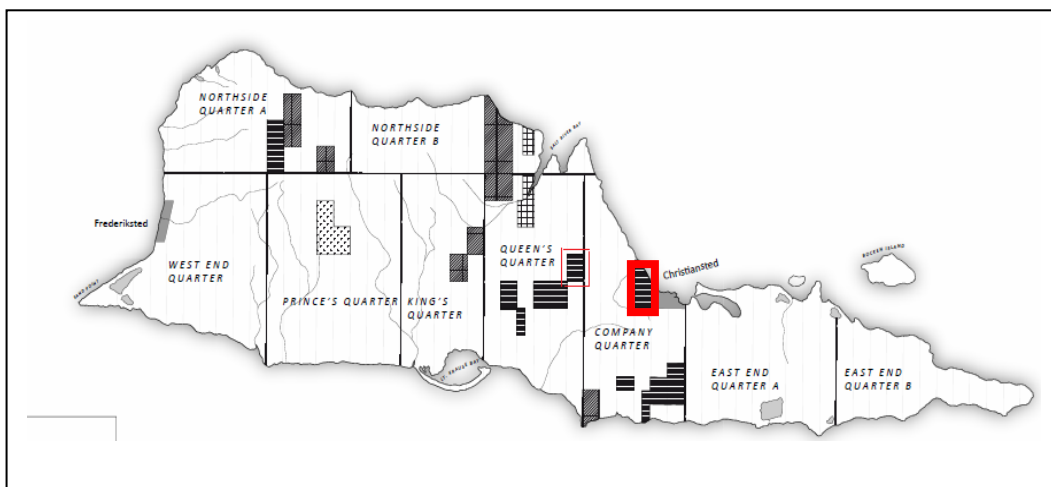
<sup>54</sup> Richard Pares, ‘Merchants and Planters’, p. 42.

<sup>55</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 1 January 1756, fo. 92.

<sup>56</sup> The piece of land in question was ‘500 or 600 feet wide by 2000 feet long’ and is recorded as 1,000 quadrate feet, not 1,000,000 see, Transcript of the cadastral survey of 1759, Generaltoldkammeret-ældre del Vestindisk-guineisk renteskriverkontor, 1690 – 1767 (365), ‘*Om Vestindien*’ Series: 411. no folio.

Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

**Figure 2c:** Richmond, outlined in red.  
Cronenberg & Jægersburg, 1750.



Location of Richmond on an outline map of St. Croix

## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

To the southwest of the main plantation was another portion of land that was two thousand feet long by one thousand feet wide, however a plot of nine hundred feet by two hundred and twenty feet was in the possession of the Moravians.<sup>57</sup>

Richmond also encroached on another plantation to the south that was fifteen hundred feet wide by two thousand feet long. Overall, the entire plantation as purchased by Laurence Bodkin in 1750 was officially recorded as being twelve million feet square. This would equate to two full Danish plantations or two hundred and ninety two British acres. As can be seen in figure 2c, Richmond was located at a very advantageous site. It was next to the town of Christiansted and one of the island's main thoroughfares (the King's Way) linked the northern coasts with the town and ran the width of the property. Having two rivers on the property, one to the north and the other to the south, would have allowed easy access to the sea and to the sheltered anchorages in Von Prock's Bay, next to Christiansted. Its exposed coastal location would also have ensured that windmills could easily harness onshore breezes.

In 1750, the site already possessed two sets of sugar works and buildings, a mill (represented by a white circle) and several slave huts. A section to the north of the plantation was under cultivation and overall, the plantation was 'above half cleared...'<sup>58</sup> When Laurence Bodkin bought this plantation on behalf of the Quadripartite they commenced production and sale of sugar and rum within a short period of time.<sup>59</sup> Apart from the main plantations at Concordia and those at Richmond, there were a few others, which were bought to boost the overall revenue and increase the productivity of the concern. These included several plantations, twelve hundred acres which were 'all in woods...in a place called the North Side' and 'some lots of land for storehouses in town.'<sup>60</sup> By purchasing land for warehouses in Christiansted, the group appear to have been preparing for the Crown takeover which, they had been assured, would cause the town to become a Freeport. Once this status had been granted, it would be possible for the group to market their wares internationally, without interference from the Company. Moreover, it would also allow them to trade in European commodities, a lucrative pursuit, particularly in wartime.

### **Plessen's Plantation**

Baker's enthusiasm for St. Croix led to his involvement in another early Irish plantation at St. Croix. This was a joint venture which had been initiated by his brother-

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<sup>57</sup> In the cadastral survey of 1759, this group is documented as the *Mæriske Brødren*. The term was also used to describe the *Herrnhutern*, also known as the Moravians see, Bro-Jørgensen, J.O., *Dansk Vestindien indtil 1755, Vore Gamle Tropekolonier*, J.O. Brønsted, ed., (8 vols., Copenhagen, 1966), i, p. 252.

<sup>58</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 January 1750/51, fo. 29.

<sup>59</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 January 1750/51, fo. 29.

<sup>60</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 January 1750/51, fo. 29.

## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

in-law, William Ryan of Montserrat in 1749. Although financially stretched, the success of the Quadripartite Concern encouraged Baker to establish a partnership with Ryan. On Ryan's untimely death in 1753 however, Baker found himself managing the plantation alone on behalf of the Ryan children, all of whom were under ten years old. It is unclear if the plantation was successful, but Baker certainly worked hard to make it so, perhaps to the detriment of his share in the Quadripartite Concern. Nonetheless, Baker's rich descriptions of the trials and tribulations of the venture give a further insight into the island's frontier phase.<sup>61</sup> These came to be known as 'Plessen's Plantation.

In 1749, William Ryan purchased a portion of Plessen's estate<sup>62</sup> in conjunction with Mads Cragh, an individual known to John Baker as 'Cragh the Dane' (Figure 2d). Consisting of two standard plantations, twenty and twenty one, they immediately set about improving and cultivating the land. Following a disagreement between the two, Ryan bought out Cragh's share. Subsequently, Ryan offered this portion to his brother-in-law, John Baker. Having recently visited St. Croix to assess the progress of his other shareholdings, Baker seemed to have been quite taken by the opportunity, 'I really could not in good conscience accept his offer, it being a very fine purchase...but he insisted I should do it and we are now come to an agreement about it, and I partake in all profits from the very first...'<sup>63</sup> This partnership was to be a short-lived but harmonious one.

Although not an investor, Tuite played an important role in the management of this plantation.<sup>64</sup> It appears that plantations were rarely paid for in full on change of ownership and a large portion of the cost of Plessen's Plantation remained outstanding to Von Plessen for a considerable time. When requesting that funds be transferred to him, John Baker requested that his brother, 'Pay Nicholas Tuite on the joint account of Mr. William Ryan of Montserrat and Myself.'<sup>65</sup> Indeed, several years later, Baker was in correspondence with Nicholas Tuite in order to establish how many more payments were owed to von Plessen. Having sent fifty hogsheads of sugar to Europe he hoped it would 'possibly amount to the payment we are to make next March: after which there are I think two more to be made to Ld Plessen...'<sup>66</sup> Baker maintained an interest in the Plessen's estate, together with that at Concordia. Accordingly, he invested heavily in both and stocked them with as many slaves as he could afford. In April 1753, Baker

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<sup>61</sup> These were numbered, 12, 13, 20, 21, 28, 29, 36, 37, 44, 45.

<sup>62</sup> On the 30 March 1736, Frederich Moth, Director of the West India and Guinea Company granted C. A. Von Plessen, a Company shareholder, a block of ten standard plantations in Prince's Quarter These were numbered, 12, 13, 20, 21, 28, 29, 36, 37, 44 and 45. The plantation came to be known as Plessen's Plantation see, L. Larsen et al, 'Sukkerplantage i Dansk Vestindien Saint Croix', pp. 222-225 and LJB, John Baker to Thomas Baker, 2 January 1753, fo. 52.

<sup>63</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 28 November 1752, fo. 51.

<sup>64</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 20 June 1753, fo. 56.

<sup>65</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 28 November 1752, fo. 51.

<sup>66</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 20 June 1753, fo. 56.

## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

purchased forty five or forty six slaves, half for Plessens, the other half for ‘my Quadripartite Concern.’ After five years, Baker hoped that ‘we shall owe nothing for either estate but have them all to ourselves and worth more than double what they cost at first.’<sup>67</sup>

In June 1753, John Baker learned of the news of William Ryan’s death which, he speculated, would ‘be of some (tho I hope, not very great) prejudice to our concern.’<sup>68</sup> William, who was a young man with a family, is likely to have composed his will in the spring of 1753, in preparation for his departure to St. Croix. It is clear that he sought to provide for his two young sons, William and John, his wife Mary (née Morphy) along with the ‘child my wife now goes with.’ Outlining that his property be divided equally between his wife and children he stipulated that his children should not come into possession of their inheritance until they reached the age of twenty one.<sup>69</sup> Finally, William appointed his friends Nicholas Tuite, James Meade, Laurence Bodkin and John Baker to be his executors. Ultimately, it was John Baker that appears to have managed William’s share of the plantation for several years following his death.

As a result, Baker was responsible for ensuring the plantation continued to be profitable. Because of restrictive company policies, Baker shipped sugars routinely from Plessen’s plantation to England.<sup>70</sup> Although this was illegal and highly unpopular at the British islands, Baker felt he had no option but to conduct the business in this way. Despite uproar amongst British sugar planters, the sale of Danish sugars on the English market was set to continue, ‘I expect the sugars sent from Plessen’s this year to England will amount to about £1300...’ Through achieving such good prices for his sugar, Baker aimed to plough back the profits so as to purchase ‘a great many cattle mills and other necessaries’. He was also anxious to repay Lord Plessen the amount still outstanding from his brother-in-law’s purchase.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 11 April, 1753. fo. 34.

<sup>68</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 20 June 1753, fo. 56.

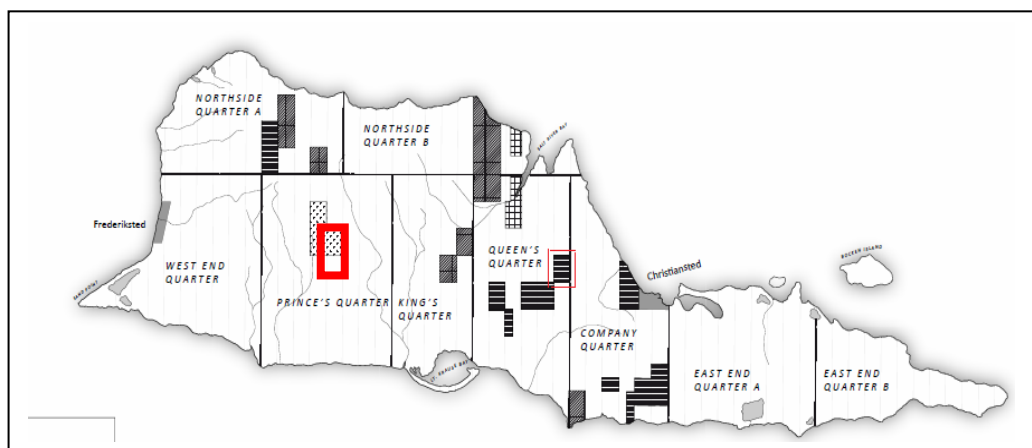
<sup>69</sup> DNA, Danske Kancelli (232), ‘*Koncepter og indlæg til vestindiske sager. 1699 – 1771.*’ Series: D37-3, Folder: Vestin.Registrant. Testementi Confirmation, 8/7/1757 “Ryan”, no folio number.

<sup>70</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Nicholas Tuite, London, 13 October 1753, fo. 60.

<sup>71</sup> LJB, John Baker to Thomas Baker, 13 October 1753, fo. 60.

Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

**Figure 2d:** Plessen's outlined in red.  
Cronenberg & Jægersburg, 1750.



Location of Plessen's on an outline map of St. Croix

## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

In a letter to his brother Joseph, John Baker explained how the sugars from Plessen's estate were illegally sent to Liverpool where they made a fine profit. Further profits were made through the sale of sugar and rum 'on the spot' at St. Croix to independent merchants.<sup>72</sup>

Despite John Baker's buoyant prospects for his new responsibilities, there were also several complications. One of these was a seven year indenture which had been made between William Ryan and the McDonaghs, a family who resided at the plantation. After William's death, the McDonaghs appear to have taken some liberties regarding their verbal contract with him. Baker, in a letter to Nicholas Tuite expressed concerns that 'for want of more preciseness [the agreement] will open a door to many disputes.' The McDonaghs, in return for their service, were entitled to a percentage of the plantation's profits. This percentage was based on the plantation's productivity as it stood on the eve of William's death. However, as the plantation expanded under the management of John Baker, the McDonaghs continued to claim their percentage of the overall profits. 'It is not to be supposed that McDonagh was to buy more negroes: and yet if 2 or 800 are bought, he shares of the advanced profit these produce in the same proportion as of what is made now...'<sup>73</sup>

Although William's brother and Baker's associate, Henry Ryan assisted in managing the estate, Baker also received help from Nicholas Tuite in resolving the dispute with the McDonaghs. By July 1755, Baker wrote that Tuite had 'promised to buy out one McDonagh who has a sixth part of Plessen's Estate (tho his sixth part is in debt to us)...'<sup>74</sup> The McDonagh's had agreed to sell their share for fifteen hundred pounds. Although it was worth significantly more than this, they were significantly in debt to the other shareholders. A condition of their selling their portion was that they be lent a further one thousand pounds sterling so as to enable them to purchase 'a little estate' that they had their eye on.<sup>75</sup>

Still keen to increase the amount of land he owned, Baker soon turned his attentions to purchasing more. In a letter to his brother outlining the terms of the division of the Quadripartite Concern, Baker mentioned that he had the opportunity to purchase a further 300 acres (approx. 2 further plantations) adjoining the Plessen's Estate.<sup>76</sup> These plantations were numbers twelve and thirteen in the Prince's Quarter and were to increase the size of that estate by a third. This can be appreciated by consulting Beck's map of 1766. On it, it can be seen that John Baker owned plantation numbers twelve,

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<sup>72</sup> LJB, John Baker to Joseph Baker, 14 October 1753, fos. 61-2.

<sup>73</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Nicholas Tuite, London, 8 November 1753, fo. 64.

<sup>74</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 12 July 1755, fo. 87.

<sup>75</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 6 April 1756, fo 93.

<sup>76</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 25 January 1756, fo. 81.

## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

twenty one and twenty two while William Ryan's heirs owned thirteen, twenty eight and twenty nine. With such a large number of plantations to his name, it is possible that Baker found himself financially stretched. He described in a letter that 'Mr. Tuite is not over pleased with my being concerned in Plessens, both as I believe he would have been glad to have had that part himself and as (which is time enough) I don't do so much for Concordia...'<sup>77</sup>

Although Tuite's misgivings may well have been founded in jealousy, it is more likely that he was concerned for Baker's financial well being. If compromised, it would affect the integrity of the Quadripartite Concern. When asked by Charles Carroll of Carrollton to evaluate Baker's overall wealth, with a view to accepting the Bakers as in-laws, Tuite's assessment was conservative at best. By 1763, Tuite observed that Plessen's was not yet running at full production. He projected that within five years, this plantation would be fully cleared and would be producing seven hundred hogsheads of sugar and up to four hundred hogsheads of rum per annum. Although lucrative in itself, deductions for managers' wages, taxes, doctors' fees, mortality of slaves and provisions for slaves could run to two thousand pounds sterling per annum. If all went well for Baker at Plessen's Plantation, he could expect an income of £10,500 sterling per year for the following twenty years.<sup>78</sup> By 1770 however, Cornelius Cortright, a wealthy merchant with strong ties to New York, had bought John Baker's share at Plessen's, along with that of the heirs of William Ryan.<sup>79</sup>

What is evident is that, from the perspective of the Irish associates, the future of the above plantations depended on the island being taken over by the Crown. Since the four had invested at the island land had increased in value. This was particularly due to the fact that that they had been assured that the island would, 'within a year or two be made a Free Port.' Shareholders in the Company and those who had heard the rumour on good authority wrote to their families in Europe telling them 'to make what purchases they can at St. Croix, for that such is the way and this is the time, to make their Fortunes.'<sup>80</sup> By 1753 however, the takeover had yet to take place and the Company continued to impose large duties on sugars sent to Europe. Moreover, the prices received by planters for their sugars were far less than the going rate. Lack of information as to the future of the island led to concern at St. Croix and several planters spoke of selling their plantations should the Company regime continue.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> JLB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 16 June 1754, fo. 71.

<sup>78</sup> Charles Carroll of Carrollton to Charles Carroll of Annapolis, 11 October [1763], MHS, MS 206, no. 104 a-c [316].

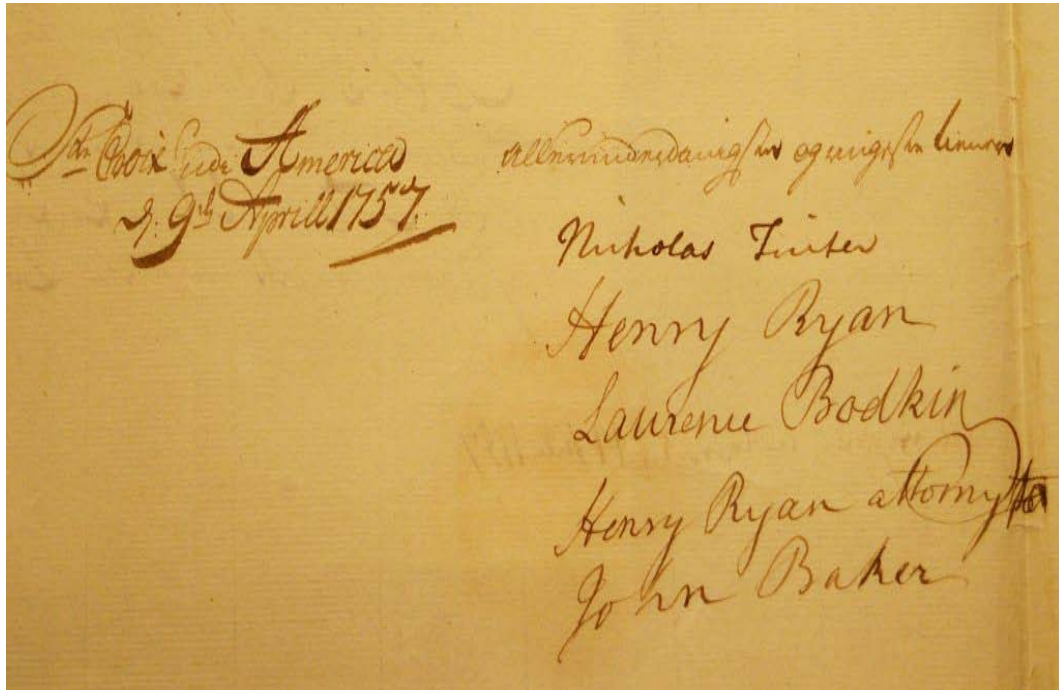
<sup>79</sup> Larsen, et al, 'Sukkerplantager i Dansk Vestindien Saint Croix', p. 225.

<sup>80</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 22 June 1751, fo. 33.

<sup>81</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Nicholas Tuite, London, 13 October 1753, fo. 60.



**Figure 2e:** Signatures of the Quadripartite Concern, 9 April 1757



St. Croix i America  
9. April 1757

allmindingen og uigjensker  
Nicholas Tuites  
Henry Ryan  
Laurence Bodkin  
Henry Ryan attorney  
John Baker

Will of William Ryan., DK 1699-1771 (232), 'Koncepter og indlæg til vestindiske sager, 1746-1760', Series: D37-3, Folder: Vestin.Registrant. Testamenti Confirmation, 8/7/1757 'Ryan', no folio number.

## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

Eventually, Wilhelm Schopen one of the leading planters at St. Croix, led a deputation to Copenhagen in order to petition the King for a reduction of duties charged on sugar and better prices for the raw sugar shipped to Copenhagen by the planters. In addition, the planters at St. Croix demanded that the island come under the Crown's immediate control.<sup>82</sup> By threatening to withdraw from St. Croix should the situation not improve, the demands of the principal planters at St. Croix were taken seriously. Removing the colony from the administration of the Company would be considered by the planters as 'an inestimable act of grace and benefaction' that would create the conditions for great prosperity.<sup>83</sup> Despite this however, Frederick V did not formally declare his intentions to take over the island until July 1754. In the meantime, the planters and merchants at the island were forced to adapt to the difficult commercial conditions that prevailed under Company rule.

### **The slave trade under Company rule**

One area the four associates found particularly difficult was maintaining a steady supply of African labour for their plantations. After 1747, it soon became clear that the Company days were numbered and little investment in the slave trade was made by Company shareholders in its latter years.<sup>84</sup> As a result, there was a chronic shortage of African labour as land was cleared and the plantations began to develop in earnest. Although the St. Croix plantations were less labour intensive than their counterparts elsewhere, the Quadripartite Concern was nonetheless, heavily dependant on African labour. In order to function efficiently a plantation required, on average, one slave per two acres of land.<sup>85</sup> Accordingly, Baker's initial plans were described to his brother early in 1751 when he wrote, 'we intend to make the whole number of Negroes 6 or 700 and everything proportionable.'<sup>86</sup> By August of that year however, it was clear that demand in the region had outstripped supply, 'I must purchase 15 or 20 negroes, they complain so grievously of want of strength at St. Croix.'<sup>87</sup>

Due in part to the Concern's extensive clearing operations, Bodkin and Ryan continually wrote to Baker from St. Croix requesting that they be supplied with more labour. In January 1752, Baker purchased several Africans for St. Croix 'I put 10 new and four season'd Negroes on the Estate about nine months ago. The New ones were

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<sup>82</sup> Sveistrup and Willerslev, *Den Danske sukkerhandels*, p. 46.

<sup>83</sup> Westergaard, *The Danish West Indies*, p. 239.

<sup>84</sup> Westergaard, *The Danish West Indies*, p. 155.

<sup>85</sup> Sheridan, R.B. 'The Rise of a Colonial Gentry: A Case Study of Antigua, 1730-1775', *The Economic History Review*, 13(1961) pp 342-57, p. 345

<sup>86</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 January 1751, fo. 27.

<sup>87</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 12 August 1751, fo. 35.

## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

Mundings<sup>88</sup> and all young from 15 to twenty or thereabouts. They were 20 guineas round and Mr. Bodkin and Harry Ryan liked them very much.<sup>89</sup> However, as the months wore on, it became clear that a shortage of labour was compromising sugar production. In April 1753, Baker lamented that Harry Ryan's attempt to expand would be hindered unless more labour was acquired.<sup>90</sup> The acquisition of an entire shipment of up to three hundred slaves became Baker's ultimate goal as he wrote to Tuite, 'I see no prospect of stocking the plantations out of Guinea Ships or any other probable way in the world than sending out a vessel to Guinea.'<sup>91</sup> The high demand for slaves within the region meant that 'the people are perfectly mad for them...we want a sweep of 60 or 70 fine ones at once...'<sup>92</sup>

As a result of such high demand, the Irish associates came to develop their own means of supplying slaves to the area. Accordingly, in August 1755, Tuite procured slaves at 'a full fourth part less than they were to be got by any other means.' This was achieved by 'buying a cargo at once and distributing them among our several concerns.' Having obtained such a large number of what was at that point a scarce commodity on St. Croix, Baker remarked of Tuite, 'In short, I don't believe that there is such another man for business in the world, either for doing much or doing it profitably.'<sup>93</sup> By the outbreak of the Seven Years' War, the Danish slave trade remained largely unregulated and as such, was open to independent merchants. As we will see in Chapter four, Bodkin took advantage of this situation and soon became one of the primary importers of African slaves to St. Croix. Working closely with Tuite in London, he secured a steady supply of slaves, both for his own plantations and for many of those in the region.

European labour was also required for the operation of a successful plantation. The shortage of artisans at the island had led to the training of African slaves in various trades.<sup>94</sup> It remained difficult however to find qualified artisans and workmen to build essential plantation works and dwellings.<sup>95</sup> By the mid eighteenth century there was already a long tradition of Irish indentures and artisans in the West Indies. Evidence suggests that as early as the seventeenth century, indentured servants were sufficiently informed that they could choose particular islands and studies have suggested that

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<sup>88</sup> Perhaps Mandinga, 'a neighbouring tribe of the Fula nation, located on the Senegal' see C.G.A. Oldendorp, *History of the mission of the Evangelical Brethren on the Caribbean Islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John*, Bossard, J.J., Highfield, A. R. and Barac, V., eds. (Ann Arbor, 1987), p. 161.

<sup>89</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 27 January 1752, fo. 52.

<sup>90</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 11 April 1753, fo. 34.

<sup>91</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, October 13 1753, fo. 60.

<sup>92</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Nicholas Tuite, London, 8 November 1753, fo. 64.

<sup>93</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 1 August 1755, fo. 89.

<sup>94</sup> William Chapman, 'Irreconcilable differences: urban residences in the Danish West Indies, 1700-1900', *Winterthur Portfolio*, 30 (1995), pp. 129-72, p. 159.

<sup>95</sup> See for example, LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Nicholas Tuite, London, 30 July 1752, fo. 47.

## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

servants' decisions were guided by reported post-indenture conditions.<sup>96</sup> In this way, given that there were more opportunities to acquire land at St. Croix, together with the fact that Catholicism was tolerated on the island, St. Croix was in a position to vie for native Irish servants and labourers who would have otherwise gone to the English Islands. By 1760, it was estimated that there were around one hundred Irishmen working on the plantations.<sup>97</sup>

Evidence suggests that conditions on St. Croix encouraged many artisans and labourers to abandon the Leeward Islands for better opportunities there. In July 1754, Governor Thomas of the Leeward Islands complained to the Board of Trade that 'several English artificers' had been taken to St. Croix against their will by a man by the name of 'Skerrit.' However, Governor Clausen of St. Croix promptly assured him that they had gone of their own free will and volition.<sup>98</sup> Irrespective of whether the artisans were of Irish descent or otherwise, it is clear that the quickly improving island of St. Croix was attracting an element of the Leeward Island skill base and, as a result, had become something of a threat to English interests in the Caribbean.

Indeed, St. Croix was fast developing into a first rate sugar producing island, whose sugars were every bit as good as sugars from the British islands. Overall, the partners invested a combined initial outlay of ten thousand pounds sterling. For this, they acquired over one thousand acres. Six years later this was valued at almost seventy four thousand pounds local currency, or forty six thousand two hundred and fifty pounds sterling. As a result of pooling their assets and individual talents, each partner acquired an estate worth between ten and twelve thousand pounds sterling.<sup>99</sup> Considering that the average value of established estates at Jamaica, with more land dedicated to sugarcane, were worth just under eight thousand pounds the partners were very successful.<sup>100</sup>

Access to capital, together with the knowledge and skills acquired on the British Islands, ensured the success of the Quadripartite Concern and the numerous plantations subsequently purchased by the associates. By far the most significant aspect of their management strategy was that, while other planters and plantations ran up ever increasing amounts of debt, their initial expense was cleared within two years. Pares describes the typical absentee planter who lived sumptuously in the metropole, 'while the absentee kept up a princely establishment in England, his attorney and overseer did

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<sup>96</sup> Beckles, 'A "riotous and unruly" lot', p. 506.

<sup>97</sup> Hugh Fenning, 'The mission to St. Croix in the West Indies, 1750-1769', *Archivium Hibernicum*, 25 (1962), pp. 75-122, p. 83.

<sup>98</sup> Thomas Hughes, *History of the Society of Jesus in North America* (2 vols., London 1917), ii, p. 578.

<sup>99</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 25 January 1757, fo. 105.

<sup>100</sup> This figure relates to the years 1741-48 see, Richard B. Sheridan, 'The wealth of Jamaica', p. 302.

## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

the same thing at his expense in the colonies.’<sup>101</sup> The partners avoided this situation, clear profit being the ultimate goal. As Baker noted,

‘Mr. Henry Ryan writes me that this year they shall pay off everybody but ourselves only and the next year build a new windmill (for we have one there already) besides purchasing 50 or 60 negroes for it be all out of the Crop itself...so that then we shall be able to add 70 or 80 negroes more every year out of its own produce besides having 40 or 50 acres more every year in canes...’<sup>102</sup>

Having been freed from the petty politics of the Leeward Islands, Tuite and his associates thrived as Burghers at St. Croix. By the mid eighteenth century, the division between the Danish Court and those involved in commercial activities was not as it was in Britain. Courtiers were frequently involved in business ventures, likewise merchants were highly influential at the Danish Court.<sup>103</sup> As Tuite’s fortunes increased, it soon became clear that both his business and planting acumen were second to none and by 1754, Tuite was in a position to approach the King with a further business proposition.

### **Petition to King Frederick V**

At first, Tuite petitioned the Propaganda Fide at Rome for the foundation of a mission on the island. As the ‘principal Catholic on St. Croix’ he wished for the ‘patronage of the mission to be given to himself and to his male heirs.’<sup>104</sup> In July 1754, some days before King Frederik V announced his plans to takeover the island, Tuite petitioned the Crown for liberty of conscience for Catholics at St. Croix. Tuite used the success of the Quadripartite Concern and the other plantations he was involved with, to prove to the Danish authorities that he, and his associates were far from the ‘Ruffians and Insolvents of desperate fortunes’ who initially populated St. Croix.

While the petition was primarily concerned with religious matters, it is clear that Tuite was thoroughly impressed by the Danish tendency to ‘tolerate difference and maintain peace’ which, in his opinion, was essential to make ‘trade and commerce flourish, enrich the nation and sustain the glory of His Majesty.’ Asserting his loyalty to the King, Tuite outlined his previous investments and future plans for the island where he planned to settle a further thousand individuals, both black and white. In doing so, he stressed that the white settlers were predominantly Catholic families and were a ready-made community which would serve as an important foundation for the island society.

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<sup>101</sup> Pares, ‘Merchants and Planters’, p. 43.

<sup>102</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 11 April 1753, fo. 34.

<sup>103</sup> Kent, *War and trade in northern seas*, p. 155.

<sup>104</sup> Fenning, ‘The mission to St. Croix’, p. 78.

## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

He set out that, with the increase in the value of their property, together with their access to trade, these Irish Catholics would serve the Danish colony well. Given the fact that he planned to transport the families all at once to the island, Tuite reasserted his commitment to the project and to the island.<sup>105</sup>

Having set out his proposed contributions of capital, expertise and manpower, Tuite's agenda was to secure for his settlers the conditions which were not available to them elsewhere, whether in Ireland or at the Leeward Islands. In consideration of his contribution, the requests seem relatively minor. At first, he humbly asked that Roman Catholics be permitted to practice their religion freely, to build churches for the celebration of the divine service and to be served by as many priests as were considered necessary. In return for this, Tuite pledged that this Catholics would 'comport themselves as zealous and loyal subjects of His Majesty.' Tuite's next request was that Catholics be allowed the privilege of serving His Majesty in the Civil or Military service, dependant of course, 'on their talents.' This last desire was to ensure that Catholic settlers would be fully integrated into island life and, most importantly, that they would have access to positions of power and influence. His aspiration was to establish a Catholic community, 'without war or exhausted soils', where commerce and trade could be conducted freely and without interference from the authorities.<sup>106</sup>

By the late 1740s it had become apparent that the potential of St. Croix as a major sugar producing island was not being maximised by the Company. As a result, foreign expertise and capital investment was sought to help establish the nascent sugar industry. Tuite and his associates purchased land at a low price and took advantage of the escalation in property values that was experienced before the Crown takeover. As represented by map of 1750, the properties they purchased were, for the most part, uncleared. Once they had developed their plantations, the associates stocked them with slaves and plantation necessities. In doing so they quadrupled their initial investment. Overall, the Quadripartite Concern were keen for the island to be taken over by the Crown so as the era of free trade could begin.

As we will see in Chapter three, the access to unrestricted trade was an essential part of Tuite's vision for St. Croix. By appealing to King Frederick's desire to promote the Danish economy, and in particular, the neutral Danish carrying trade, Tuite's proposal satisfied a number of the King's concerns. Tuite based his idea on the principle that, given the correct commercial conditions, sugar plantations could be self-financing

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<sup>105</sup> Nicholas Tuite to King Frederick V Copenhagen, 22 July 1754, DNA, Danske Kancelli (232), 'Koncepter og indlæg til vestindiske sager, 1746-1760', Series: D37-3, folder 12, no folio number.

<sup>106</sup> See David Dickson for the significance of Catholic involvement in formal civic duties, David Dickson, 'Catholics and trade in eighteenth century Ireland: an old debate revisited' in Tom Power and Kevin Whelan, eds., *Endurance and emergence: Catholics in Ireland in the eighteenth century* (Dublin, 1990).

## Irish plantations and the development of St. Croix

through a regime of careful management, commercial expertise and access to unrestricted trade. This removed the need for the Crown to make large investments of capital which, at this point, it simply did not have access to. By basing himself in London, Tuite provided the necessary commercial and financial services for his associates in St. Croix. This gave them access to the international and trans-imperial sugar trade.

## Chapter Three

### Nicholas Tuite and the Atlantic sugar trade, 1756-1763

In 1754, the Crown takeover of the Danish West Indian islands was greeted with jubilation by planters and merchants alike.<sup>1</sup> Gone were the restrictive company monopolies which had stifled the sugar industry and arrested the development of St. Croix. Instead, the King appeared to be moving towards a liberal regime based on free trade, such as that alluded to by the Irish planters several years previously.<sup>2</sup> In many respects, the takeover was presented as a solution to the planters' grievances.<sup>3</sup> However, it soon became clear that the monopolies enjoyed by the Company were merely replaced by the equally restrictive regime of private enterprise in Copenhagen. Accordingly, Danish West Indian trade became just as regulated by the Crown as it had been while under company control. Wishing to ensure that St. Croix remained a market closed to everything other than Danish manufactures and provisions, certain merchants in Denmark were given incentives to trade with the island in the form of monopolies and bounties. However, the poor quality of Danish goods, together with the infrequency of Danish ships, simply served to promote the development of an entirely unregulated commercial environment.<sup>4</sup> Although smuggling was often characteristic of some elements of West Indian society, illegal trade at St. Croix soon became systemic and involved members of local government at all levels.<sup>5</sup> With the outbreak of the Seven Years' War, a host of lucrative commercial opportunities presented themselves to the Danish colonists. Indeed, for the duration of the war, the colonists were unofficially encouraged to evade Danish regulations in order to pursue commercial gain for the island, and for Denmark. The colonists at St. Croix did not operate in isolation however and their wartime trading patterns were heavily influenced by the commercial policies of both Britain and France. As we will see, the Irish mercantile community in London acted on behalf of the residents of St. Croix and often played a pivotal role in the co-ordination of the intermediary trade that existed between the two belligerent states.

In this chapter I will discuss the role of Irish intermediary merchants within the international Danish sugar trade. At the outbreak of the Anglo-French war in 1756, changes occurred in the extent to which the commercial regulations of both states were

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<sup>1</sup> Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien 1755-1848*, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 22 June 1751, fo. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien 1755-1848*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>4</sup> Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien 1755-1848*, p. 63.

<sup>5</sup> Olsen and Møller, *Toldvæsenet i Dansk Vestindien*, pp. 54-7.



enforced in the West Indies. Britain, the dominant power, continued to strictly enforce its Navigation Acts with the help of the navy and the use of privateers. Meanwhile France, whose West Indian colonies were suffering at the hands of British blockades, relaxed the enforcement of its commercial regulations in order to avoid the decimation of its sugar trade. Following this, Denmark a state desperately trying to maintain a policy of neutrality, chose to endorse publicly a protectionist agenda. Privately however, elements of the State's administration encouraged the illicit carrying trade which occurred between St. Croix, French St. Domingue and Europe. This trade was largely orchestrated from London, where members of the Irish merchant community serviced the commercial needs of their associates at St. Croix.

Eventually, Denmark's unofficial promotion of contraband trade with France, led to a protracted diplomatic dispute with Britain. As a result, in the late 1750s a large part of Denmark's national fleet was seized by British privateers and held on suspicion of trading with the enemy. The records associated with this dispute offer an insight into the Danish sugar trade from a metropolitan perspective and show the importance of this trade to the Danish economy. In particular however, they also reveal the role played by the Irish merchant and West Indian agent, Nicholas Tuite. A well-practiced intermediary trader, Tuite negotiated the release of several of these vessels. By doing so, he demonstrated the extent of his involvement in the trans-imperial sugar trade.

Following an overview of his involvement in the Anglo-Danish dispute, I will show how in the aftermath of these events, Tuite's contribution to the overall trade was recognised by the Danish Crown. In spite of his involvement in contraband trade, the Irish merchant was invited to an audience with Frederick V in Copenhagen. There, he was honoured as the 'founder of the colony' at St. Croix. In itself, this was a tremendous achievement and demonstrates Tuite's ability to overcome linguistic, cultural and legal barriers in the pursuit of lucrative commercial opportunities. Overall however, Tuite's journey to Copenhagen elucidates the extent of his European commercial network. In a discussion of this journey, which was documented extensively by John Baker, I will show the ways in which eighteenth century merchants conducted their affairs in spite of geographical obstacles.

### **Irish intermediary merchants in London**

By the outbreak of the Seven Years' War, both Tuite and John Kirwan owned land at St. Croix and maintained separate premises on Lime Street in London.<sup>6</sup> While Kirwan

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<sup>6</sup> Tuite had a number of addresses throughout his career as a merchant. All of them were within striking distance of St. Mary's Axe and Cheapside. He conducted his business at Lime Street until the mid 1760s. From the mid-1760s to the early 1770s his place of business was located at No. 6 Prince's Street, see Henry

## Nicholas Tuite and the Atlantic sugar trade, 1756-1763

was primarily involved in the insurance and brokerage industry, Tuite acted as a West Indian commission agent. In light of this, it is not surprising that Kirwan and Tuite would choose to locate both of their premises on Lime Street, as this was a mere stone's throw away from Lloyd's Bank, East India House, the Baltic Exchange and other financial and commercial institutions located at St. Mary's Axe.<sup>7</sup> As a commission agent, Tuite financed Danish cargoes and transactions for a fee of two and a half percent. Ultimately, he was responsible for cargoes until they reached their final destinations. The role of agents like Tuite and Kirwan was to find a buyer for cargoes, to arrange insurance, and to undertake delivery and direction of shipments when they arrived.<sup>8</sup>

The heavily protected and tightly regulated sugar trades of the European powers offered limited opportunities for commercial expansion. Understandably, competition among traders was fierce, and in time, this led to considerable innovation in how merchants came to organise their trades.<sup>9</sup> Those involved in the colonial trades sought new ways of achieving an advantage over their competitors and individuals like Nicholas Tuite went to great lengths to achieve this. Although heavily involved in the Danish trade he did not choose to locate his business in Copenhagen. A relatively cosmopolitan city by the mid-eighteenth century, the Danish capital remained remote from the commercial centres of Europe.<sup>10</sup> Conversely, London was at the heart of international systems of finance, information, communication, wealth and power, all of which merged to create a commercial city whose influence spanned the globe.<sup>11</sup>

Truxes has studied the roots, composition and function of the thriving Irish mercantile community in London during the eighteenth century. Primarily associated with the provisioning and linen industries, this community also played a role in banking and finance both within the British Empire and beyond it.<sup>12</sup> Throughout this period, Irish merchant houses in London played a crucial role in tending to the needs of their colonial associates. From as early as 1678, Galway families, such as the Kirwans and the

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Kent, *Kent's directory for the year 1759* (London, 1759), p. 115; Thomas Mortimer, *The universal director, 1763* (London, 1763), p. 71; Henry Kent, *Kent's directory for the year 1766* (London, 1766), p. 135; Henry Kent, *Kent's directory for the year 1768* (London, 1768), p. 169 [Online resources, Gale, NUI Galway, accessed 24 February 2011] See also, 'Will of John Kirwan', confirmed: no date, proved: 24 April 1799, TNA, PROB 11/1322, [image reference: 238]

<sup>7</sup> Truxes, 'London's Irish merchant community', pp. 270-3.

<sup>8</sup> For a description of the agency system which characterised British trade with the Baltic see, H.S.K. Kent, 'The Anglo-Norwegian timber trade in the eighteenth century', *The Economic History Review*, 8 (1955), pp. 62-74, p. 69.

<sup>9</sup> Jacob M. Price, 'What did Merchants Do? Reflections of British Overseas Trade, 1660-1790', *The Journal of Economic History*, 49 (1989), pp. 267-84, pp. 275-7.

<sup>10</sup> John J. McCusker, *Money and exchange in Europe and America, 1600-1775: a handbook* (Chapel Hill, 1978), pp. 80-1.

<sup>11</sup> London's role at the heart of Empire is examined in great detail in, Nuala Zahedieh, *The Capital and the Colonies; London and the Atlantic economy 1660-1700* (Cambridge, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> Truxes, 'London's Irish merchant community', pp. 271-310.

## Nicholas Tuite and the Atlantic sugar trade, 1756-1763

Bodkins, were represented in London.<sup>13</sup> It is not surprising therefore that their descendents, John Kirwan and Lawrence Bodkin, were involved in the complex trans-colonial trade that facilitated the development of the St. Croix sugar industry. Meanwhile, Nicholas Tuite had married-in to the Skerret family, another prominent Galway mercantile family with strong ties to the British capital.<sup>14</sup>

Location was crucial to the success of this enterprise and London's position at the centre of global commerce gave Tuite and Kirwan access to information regarding international markets. In addition, the sheer volume of the trade that passed through the city allowed resident merchants to take advantage of the cheapest rates of insurance in Europe.<sup>15</sup> Tuite's connections with the Irish linen and provisioning trades allowed him access to plentiful amounts of low-cost, high-quality, goods that found ready markets in the West Indies. Added to this, the British bounties placed on linen goods to encourage the industry made this commodity even cheaper to purchase.<sup>16</sup>

The most important aspect of this trade was the ability to transfer large amounts of cash across imperial boundaries. This was facilitated by Bills of Exchange which could be drawn on London. A relatively straightforward financial mechanism, the commission system had the potential to become tremendously complicated. Based almost entirely on trust, it allowed individuals to borrow on their reputations.<sup>17</sup> Most importantly, it allowed Tuite to sell his sugars in ports such as Hamburg, and to then have his money remitted to him in London. An 'invisible' marketplace, such financial transactions were unrestricted by law and as such, virtually unregulated.<sup>18</sup> As a result, the duty free proceeds of Tuite's West Indian sugar could be invested in another cargo of goods or slaves for the St. Croix market.

All of these benefits helped Tuite and Kirwan to conduct their Danish West Indian enterprise. What set them apart from their competitors was their access to the neutral carrying trade. When combined with the above set of commercial advantages, Tuite gained the ability to exploit the best of the British Empire while evading its restrictions. Similarly, his position within the British Empire and his access to low cost goods, allowed Tuite to undercut Danish merchants within their own empire. In addition, Tuite's evasion of Danish commercial regulations and his exploitation of the neutral Danish carrying trade gave Tuite unfettered access to the blockaded French markets.

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<sup>13</sup> Cullen, 'Galway merchants in the outside world', pp. 75-6.

<sup>14</sup> *Pedigree of Skerrett of Ballinduff, Co. Galway, 1600 - 1700*, NLI, GO, Ms. 161, p. 95.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Pares, *War and trade in the West Indies, 1739-1763* (Oxford, 1936), p. 404.

<sup>16</sup> For more detail on this point see, Chapter Four, p. 129.

<sup>17</sup> John J. McCusker, *Money and exchange in Europe and America*, p. 22.

<sup>18</sup> Patrick K. O'Brien, 'Inseparable connections: trade, economy, fiscal state and the expansion of Empire, 1688-1815', in Marshall, P.J. ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (5 vols., Oxford, 1998), ii, p. 63.

### **The French West Indian market**

By the mid-eighteenth century, the prize colony of France's Atlantic Empire was Saint Domingue, located two days' sail to the west of St. Croix on the island of Hispaniola. Under the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697, France and Spain divided the island of Hispaniola in two. The eastern half became Spanish Santo Domingo, while the western half became French Saint Domingue.<sup>19</sup> It soon became France's most important source of sugar and by 1720 its production already exceeded that of Jamaica. *Le Cap Français*, or simply '*Le Cap*', was a settlement located to the northwest. At the heart of the French colonial sugar trade, it soon established its reputation as the Paris of the Antilles. *Le Cap* was surrounded by prime sugar plantations and its inhabitants assisted in the development of the cutting edge technology that was required to meet the growing demands of the French metropole. By 1754, the island was developing at a rapid pace and there were a total of five hundred and ninety two sugar works at the French colony. This was in stark contrast to Spanish Santo Domingo, where in the same year there were a mere twenty sugar works.<sup>20</sup>

The resident merchant population at *Le Cap* prospered in line with the expansion of the French sugar trade. This industry also served to enrich the Atlantic ports of France and in particular Bordeaux and Nantes. Dominated by the strict *exclusif*, measures were taken to ensure that the produce of Saint Domingue was shipped entirely to France and that the colonists sustained themselves with French goods and manufactures. Although foreign traders could trade there with the purchase of *permissions*, the island's trade was all but limited to French natives.<sup>21</sup> Like the British laws of navigation, the French system encouraged bilateral colonial commerce through a series of preferential bounties and discouraged intra-colonial trade by exacting heavy duties and taxes. Under peacetime conditions, this system functioned well and by the mid eighteenth century, the colony produced and exported forty three thousand tons more than the combined totals of the British sugar producing islands.<sup>22</sup> As we will see however, with the outbreak of war came the disruption and ultimate destruction of many aspects of French commerce.

The Danish West Indies, and in particular St. Croix, were well positioned to take advantage of these conditions. In times of peace, the laws that governed the Danish West Indian trade resembled those of other nations and were highly protectionist in nature.

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<sup>19</sup> Following a bloody revolution, this colony became the Republic of Haiti on 1 January 1804 see, Butel, *Histoire des Antilles françaises*, p. 302.

<sup>20</sup> Jacques de Cauna, *Au temps des isles à sucre: Histoire* -  
*siècle* (Paris, 2003), pp. 1-14.

<sup>21</sup> Butel, *Histoire des Antilles françaises*, p. 171.

<sup>22</sup> Butel, *Histoire des Antilles françaises*, p. 159.

## Nicholas Tuite and the Atlantic sugar trade, 1756-1763

Following the Crown takeover of the Danish islands, a provisional edict governing trade at the islands was issued. That of 30 August 1754 was the first in a series of laws which came to undermine and disappoint the aspirations of islanders who believed trade at the islands would become unrestricted and truly free under Frederick V. The first proclamation asserted the overall objective of the Crown's scheme – to promote the interests of the European regions of the Danish state above those of the West Indian colonists. Trade was made free to all of the King's subjects in Denmark, Norway and Slesvig. However, it was decreed that all trade with the islands be direct, to and from Denmark, Norway or Slesvig. Ships employed on this route were to be domestic ships, which included those from the Danish West Indies. This was on the condition that the skipper, mate and at least two thirds of the crew were 'true Danish subjects'. All foreign trade between the Danish islands and non-Danish regions of Europe was strictly forbidden, as was the trade between the islands and North America. In addition, it was decreed that all sugar produced in Danish colonies could only be shipped to a small number of refineries in Denmark.<sup>23</sup>

For the population at the Danish islands, the new regulations were reminiscent of those enforced by the Company. Despite calls for the Danish islands to become freeports, no such commercial liberty was granted until after the war in 1764.<sup>24</sup> In the intervening war years, the Danish islands were subjected to a series of ill-conceived decrees which failed to recognise the quotidian realities of life at the West Indies. A second edict dated 22 April 1755, simply reinforced the commercial restrictions of the first. In it, the ban on all foreign trade was sustained. Trade with North America was also restricted but could be allowed in certain circumstances to be decided by the General Governor of the island. Provisions were to be imported duty free – as long as they were Danish. Provisions from other jurisdictions could also be imported without duty as long as they were shipped in Danish ships with Danish crews. The importation of foreign manufactures was forbidden when similar items were produced in Denmark. Items intended for the Danish islands which were not produced domestically, were to be shipped via Denmark, where a four per cent transiting tax was applied. If such items were produced in Denmark but not in sufficient quantities, the charge was six per cent. Finally, foreign manufactures which were produced in abundance in Denmark, were charged an eight per cent transiting tax before they were shipped to the West Indies.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Olsen and Møller, *Toldvæsenet i Dansk Vestindien*, p. 44.

<sup>24</sup> In this year, St. Thomas became a Freeport, although not in the modern sense of the word. Free trade was allowed with North American ports from 1764, but trade with European ports had to be conducted in Danish ships. After 1767, trade with Europe also became free but Danish traders continued to receive preferential rates of duties, see Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien 1755-1848*, p. 64.

<sup>25</sup> Olsen and Møller, *Toldvæsenet i Dansk Vestindien*, p. 46.

The restrictions were unpopular with the colonists and certain members of the authorities. General Governor Baron Von Prock, whose administration at St. Croix began a few short months after the second edict of 1755, soon found himself charged with the implementation of a Danish law which was incompatible with realities at the island. He was of a similar view to Von Schopen, who had earlier made a substantial case for the granting of Freeport status to the island. In a report to the College of Commerce, Von Prock made it clear that he was thoroughly aware of the numerous planters of substantial means at neighbouring British islands. Due to a shortage of available land there, such planters were very keen to establish themselves at St. Croix. However, they were deterred by the restriction of free trade at the island. This report, together with a series of complaints from the local government at St. Croix during 1756, led to an immediate reassessment of the legislation.<sup>26</sup> As was the case during the days of the Company however, dealings with Copenhagen were never straightforward.

### **The impact of war on commercial legislation**

With the declaration of war in 1756, the restrictive regulations imposed by metropolitan authorities on West Indian trade became increasingly impractical. As the war progressed, Britain tightened the enforcement of her regulations in an effort to stifle trade with France and the French colonies. This made intra-island trade more risky, but above all, more lucrative. Within the first year of the conflict, it was clear that France did not have the manpower or the naval forces necessary to defend itself from British attack and blockade.<sup>27</sup> Adopting a purely defensive position, the French *exclusif* came to be abandoned for the duration of the hostilities. This was in order to avoid the total decimation of its colonial possessions.

The French islands that prospered during times of peace, were devastated by war. Plantations were at risk of being burned and destroyed by the enemy and commercial ties with the metropole were often severed as a result of blockades. In spite of the wars however, Saint Domingue endured, and even prospered during the Seven Years' War. This can be appreciated by the numbers of slaves residing at the island during this time. In 1754, one hundred and seventy six thousand slaves worked the French plantations, while in 1763 this figure had increased by thirty thousand.<sup>28</sup> Such an increase in the slave population can only be attributed to extensive illicit trade. In fact, due to the naval superiority of the British forces, the ports and harbours of Saint Domingue were placed under blockade and remained virtually isolated throughout this period. During the war,

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<sup>26</sup> Olsen and Møller, *Toldvæsenet i Dansk Vestindien*, pp. 46-7.

<sup>27</sup> Jonathan R. Dull, *The French Navy and the Seven Years' War* (London, 2005), pp. 9-12.

<sup>28</sup> Butel, *Histoire des Antilles françaises*, pp. 119 and 150-9.

large amounts of sugar continued to be produced. However the French colonists had no access to their metropolitan markets where this sugar could be sold. As a result, even if they could pay for French manufactures, supplies and provisions, there was no way of obtaining them. In order to survive, the French colonies were keen to encourage commercial relations with any merchant who was prepared to take the risk of trading at Saint Domingue.<sup>29</sup> This encouraged merchants who were based at neighbouring islands, such as St. Croix, to abandon the commercial regulations of their own islands so as to engage in the lucrative trade with Saint Domingue.

As we have seen, war time conditions changed the extent to which commercial regulations were enforced by the metropolitan governments of Britain and France. Denmark was no exception to this. Keen to assert its control over its newly acquired island, the Danish Crown was determined to ensure that the debt it had incurred by taking over St. Croix was repaid in full. As a result, there was a general reluctance by the Crown to liberalise trade at St. Croix. In many respects, the Crown's strict adherence to the principles of mercantilism was not in keeping with the commercial realities at the West Indies during peacetime and it was certainly out of step with the wartime conditions there. Conscious of the implications of such a war, the administration in Copenhagen was under no illusion that the Crown's strict policy of mercantilism was not best suited to take advantage of potential commercial opportunities.<sup>30</sup>

Accordingly, a third royal edict, relating to Danish West Indian trade during the war, was issued on the 25 October 1756. In it, trade to South America and the other Danish colonies was permitted. However, commercial links to all Dutch colonies and, in particular St. Eustatius, was expressly forbidden, but the Board of Commerce relented on its ban on North American trade by permitting plantation goods and hardware to be imported from that region at a rate of five per cent duty. Provisions which were to be consumed on the island as opposed to being exported, were charged at twenty five per cent import duty. Another concession was that rum and molasses could be used as payment for such items in unlimited quantities. Sugar could also be used as payment for American goods, but only up to one sixth of the overall value of the commodities for which it would be exchanged. Meanwhile, direct trade between the Danish islands and non-Danish regions of Europe, remained forbidden. Finally, it was decreed that slaves could be imported duty free but were subject to the annual head tax. Local produce could be used to pay for up to one half of the value of slaves to be imported.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Butel, *Histoire des Antilles françaises*, pp. 154-9.

<sup>30</sup> Olsen and Møller, *Toldvæsenet i Dansk Vestindien*, p. 47.

<sup>31</sup> Olsen and Møller, *Toldvæsenet i Dansk Vestindien*, p. 47.

Thus, from an official perspective, the Crown maintained its dedication to mercantilist principles. Unofficially however, it was recognised that Denmark's neutral carrying trade could benefit from the war. As a result, commercial regulations at the Danish colony were persistently evaded, both by government officials and local merchants. While Britain was keen to promote a protectionist empire, and to damage French commerce wherever possible; Denmark turned a blind eye to the illicit trade conducted by its own subjects in order to promote its sugar industry, together with its neutral carrying trade.

### **The importance of neutrality during wartime**

It has been shown that, during the American Revolutionary war, certain senior civil servants and members of the Danish Council of State speculated in private ventures which involved the abuse of Danish neutrality and threatened Anglo-Danish diplomatic relations.<sup>32</sup> This was also the case during the Seven Years' War when the failure by Danish authorities to implement the states' protectionist policies was commonplace.<sup>33</sup> Feldbæk argues that not only was the Danish government aware of the widespread contraventions of its strictly mercantilist trading regulations, it appreciated that such practices benefited them economically. Although trading with the French or the Dutch during the war was illegal, such practices were considered to be of long term gain. Accordingly, 'it regarded such undertakings...as representing economic bridgeheads for the future' and 'it supported these undertakings in the expectation that it would be possible to retain in peacetime a part of that share of the market which Denmark had won in wartime.'<sup>34</sup>

During the Seven Years' War, Danish neutrality can be seen as a corollary to the state's policy of diplomatic evasion and was 'a particular way of playing the old game of the balance of power.'<sup>35</sup> The precarious diplomatic position in which Denmark found itself, combined with its lack of economic clout within Europe, led the state to follow a series of ostensibly contradictory policies. In essence, the mercantilist agenda it displayed in the legislation governing the West India trade appears to have been utterly at odds with the aspirations it had for its neutral carrying trade. However, by sustaining this contradiction, Denmark was in a position to maintain a degree of control over its

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<sup>32</sup> Feldbæk, 'Eighteenth-century Danish neutrality', pp. 3-31, p. 10 and Ole Feldbæk, 'Caracas-speculationen 1782-1783: Dansk neutralitetsudnyttelse under den amerikanske frihedskrig', *Historisk Tidsskrift*, 12(1972), pp. 159-175.

<sup>33</sup> Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien, 1755-1848*, p. 65.

<sup>34</sup> Feldbæk, 'Eighteenth-century Danish neutrality', p. 10.

<sup>35</sup> Holbraad, *Danish Neutrality*, p. 7.



domestic and international sugar industry.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, by taking advantage of wartime conditions, the state intended to develop its neutral carrying trade through whatever means were open to it, even if it meant trading with, and for, the French. Although never as substantial as the neutral trade carried out by the Dutch, it was nevertheless sizeable.<sup>37</sup>

There was a general consensus regarding the concept of neutrality in international law and it was deemed reasonable that neutrals should not carry contraband of war. Nor should neutrals enter ports that were blockaded. During the eighteenth century however, there were no international legal mechanisms to arbitrate in disputes over such matters, and the only recourse in such matters was to engage diplomatic negotiations or to submit to the judgement of a court of law within either jurisdiction. Although general concepts of the principles of neutrality existed, in practice, a country's neutrality was very often defined by the treaties it held with other nations. Due to the age of such treaties, many of them being over a century old, various interpretations of the sentiment of agreements were often made in order to promote a state's political or commercial agendas.<sup>38</sup>

As a result, Denmark's view of its own neutrality shifted repeatedly during the war. Governed by a treaty with France of 1742 and Britain of 1670, Denmark chose to define its own neutrality according to the definition which suited its own interests best. This was evident on several occasions, concerning the Danish state's understanding of contraband. While the British treaty did not define a specific definition of contraband, the French treaty did. For France, items excluded from being designated as contraband included foodstuffs, clothing, metal and ship's chandlery. Using this definition, Denmark conducted an extensive wartime trade in such items. Throughout the war however, Britain contested this definition and sought to include naval stores and foodstuffs. As we will see below, this led to a series of contentious seizures of Danish ships by British privateers.<sup>39</sup>

As Saint Domingue became increasingly desperate for supplies, the incentive to trade with England's enemy increased. As we will see, a number of deceits were utilised in order to conceal the French origins of a cargo. One of these was the use of neutral shipping to return French goods to Europe. This is evident in the figures which show that during the years 1757 to 1758, English privateers seized two hundred and eighty one

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<sup>36</sup> The Danish refining industry was highly lucrative and was utterly dependent on a steady stream of raw sugar from the colonies. Duties and debts owed to the King were remitted by the planters in sugar. Meanwhile, the Danish West Indies represented one of Copenhagen's most significant markets for manufactures. See Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien, 1755-1848*, pp. 63-79.

<sup>37</sup> In the late eighteenth century, the extent of Danish shipping has been calculated as representing around six million *rixdollars* in Danish revenues, the contemporary equivalent of £1.2 million sterling, see Feldbæk, 'Eighteenth-century Danish neutrality', p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> Feldbæk, 'Eighteenth-century Danish neutrality', p. 5.

<sup>39</sup> Tuxen, 'The Danish view of neutrality', p. 209.

enemy ships and one hundred and sixty five neutral ships, all of which were accused of trading with England's enemy.<sup>40</sup> The seizure of enemy goods being transported by neutral ships was a means of discouraging neutral trade with the enemy. The use of privateers could not prevent illicit trade however, as merchants and traders simply came to rely on increasingly convoluted ways of bringing goods to markets. As trading conditions became more difficult, the risk of being seized grew higher and the potential profits from illicit trade increased. Overall, war was good for trade. In particular, war was extremely rewarding for the traders of neutral nations. As a deterrent, the privateers certainly modified the behaviour of those involved in illicit shipping. Few merchants wished for their ships and cargoes to be seized, or for the expensive detention and legal proceedings that could endure for years.<sup>41</sup>

### **British Navigation Laws and the Rule of '56**

Pares describes the mood of the British authorities at the beginning of the war, 'of what good to be masters of the seas, if the enemy was entitled to furl his own flag and carry on his normal commerce in the ships of Neutrals?'<sup>42</sup> Indeed, Britain's overall objective was to starve French colonists of provisions, hardware, slave labour and all the necessities required to conduct a viable sugar industry and to sustain a population. From a British perspective, a major threat to this objective was the ability of neutral nations to supply French colonies with what they required. Given that Denmark, Sweden, Holland and Spain were neutral,<sup>43</sup> at the early stages of the war, Britain presented a cautionary piece of legislation called the 'Doctrine of continuous voyage', which was based on the highly contentious 'Rule of '56'.<sup>44</sup>

In theory, Britain was a supporter of neutrality and neutral trade, having been a beneficiary of it during the war between France and Holland in the 1670s.<sup>45</sup> Traditionally, neutral nations espoused the rule of *Free ships, free goods, unfree ships, unfree goods*. This was significant in that enemy cargo was permitted to be carried on board neutral ships, but neutral cargo carried on an enemy vessel could be confiscated.<sup>46</sup> Once Britain had established itself as a belligerent, it was found that this definition

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<sup>40</sup> Pares, *Colonial Blockade and Neutral Rights*, p. 18.

<sup>41</sup> See for example, 'Extract of a letter from Nicholas Tuite to Reinhart Iselin, June 1 1759', included in correspondence between Goodricke and Holderness, 19 June 1759, DNA, TKUA (301), '*Sp. Del., Engl. A, II, 30*' Folder: Breve fra Titley og Gooderick til Lord Holderness, 1759.

<sup>42</sup> Pares, *Colonial Blockade and Neutral Rights*, p. 181.

<sup>43</sup> Spain remained neutral until February 1762 when the country was drawn into the war see Jean O. McLachlan, 'The Uneasy Neutrality. A study of Anglo-Spanish disputes over Spanish ships prized 1756-59', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 6 (1938), pp. 55-77.

<sup>44</sup> Pares describes the development of this law in great detail, see Pares, *Colonial Blockade*, pp. 180-222.

<sup>45</sup> Pares, *Colonial Blockade*, p. 180.

<sup>46</sup> Pares, *Colonial Blockade*, p. 172-3.

allowed too many loopholes and led to the widespread practice of ‘colouring’, whereby enemy property was disguised as another’s in order to prevent its being confiscated.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, given the commercial advantage enjoyed by neutral shipping, British merchants were keen to limit the practice.<sup>48</sup> Desiring to eradicate this practice, Britain came to disregard the *Free ships, free goods* principle, despite the fact that it had been specifically agreed upon in several of its commercial treaties with other nations.

As a result, following several test cases in the British Prize Courts, it was found that a neutral’s trade was only found to be lawful if that trade was carried on for the neutral nation’s benefit, as opposed to that of Britain’s enemy. In short, a fundamental distinction was made between ‘trading *with* the enemy, and trading *for* the enemy.’ If a neutral merchant was found to be trading for the enemy, the merchant would no longer be neutral. In fact, the merchant would be considered to be an ally of Britain’s enemy, and as such, an enemy of Britain. In such a case, the merchant was liable to have all goods confiscated and deemed by the Prize Courts to be lawful prize.<sup>49</sup>

In essence, the Rule of ’56 was based on the premise that if trade between two nations was restricted by protectionist policies during peacetime, it should follow that such trade be prohibited during wartime, particularly if one became a combatant, while the other remained neutral.<sup>50</sup> Otherwise, the neutral party could be accused of trading for, rather than with, the enemy. Irrespective of this, Danish neutral shipping remained a thoroughly lucrative pursuit during the wars of the eighteenth century.<sup>51</sup>

### **Anglo-Danish dispute, 1758 to 1759**

This section will show how the unofficial Danish endorsement of the contraband trade was supported by powerful members of the trading community in Copenhagen. In addition, it examines the role played by Nicholas Tuite in London as the principal negotiator who organised settlements between British privateers and a number of captured Danish vessels. In spite of his evasion of Danish commercial regulations,<sup>52</sup> and following his negotiation of the release of Danish ships, Tuite was honoured in Copenhagen. Invited to attend an audience with King Frederick V in 1760, Tuite was highly praised as being the ‘founder of the colony’ at St. Croix. Although his commercial practices were not in keeping with Danish mercantilist policy, he had shown

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<sup>47</sup> Pares, *Colonial Blockade*, p. 169.

<sup>48</sup> See Baker’s comments regarding ‘foreign sugars’ and the proposed Sugar Bill of 1753. LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Nicholas Tuite, London, 22 June 1753, fo. 57.

<sup>49</sup> Pares, *Colonial Blockade*, p. 183.

<sup>50</sup> Pares, *Colonial Blockade*, p. 223.

<sup>51</sup> Gøbel, ‘Danish trade to the West Indies and Guinea, 1671 – 1754,’ p. 111.

<sup>52</sup> The specifics of Tuite’s involvement in illegal trade at St. Croix will be discussed in Chapter Four, p. 120

that it was possible to finance the initial development of the sugar industry at St. Croix through trade.

During the years 1758 to 1759, British privateers seized a number of Danish ships on their return from the West Indies. Due to the fact that many of the cases were settled through negotiation, as opposed to in court, records relating to them are fragmentary. However, the number of ships seized is said to have been thirteen.<sup>53</sup> The first to be seized was the *Constantia*, in June 1758. Subsequent Danish vessels captured during this dispute were the *Margaretha*, *Emanuel*, *Sophia Magdelina*, *Christiana Sophia*, *Isle of St. Thomas*, *Justicia*, *Maria*, *Louisa*, *Flet Wapen Von Freiderickstadt*, *Planter*, *Little Lucia Sophia* and *Ville de Bergen*. The *Fryheid*, another vessel, was technically Dutch, however its crew and cargo were Danish and as such it merited the attention of Count Bothmer in London.<sup>54</sup>

The ships and their cargoes, which belonged to some of Copenhagen's wealthiest merchants, were extremely valuable and represented a significant share of Denmark's colonial revenue.<sup>55</sup> As events unfolded and successive reports of seizures reached Denmark, there was uproar in Copenhagen. This was due in no small part to the fact that courtiers, members of the nobility and government officials frequently invested in imperial commerce.<sup>56</sup> Given the state's limited reserves of working capital and specie, Denmark was not in a position to wait for its ships to be returned. It could only be expected that delays in the return of valuable cargoes could jeopardise Denmark's lucrative trade in the re-export of sugar. Similarly, there were also concerns that the refineries, which depended on regular and large supplies of the commodity, would be unable to sustain production.<sup>57</sup>

As the ships sat idle in numerous ports around Britain and Ireland, their cargoes rapidly depreciating, urgent diplomatic requests for their release were met with silence from Whitehall. The Danish ships and cargoes, all suspected of carrying French

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<sup>53</sup> Jespersen and Feldbæk, *Revanche og Neutralitet*, p. 306.

<sup>54</sup> Documentation relating to these vessels and the diplomatic dispute can be found in the Danish diplomatic correspondence between Count Bothmer, Danish consul in London and Count Bernstorff in Copenhagen on the following dates: 9 January, 22 January, 6 March, 27 March, 17 April, 24 April, 4 May, 18 May, 15 June, 17 July, 3 August, 6 November 1759, DNA, TKUA (301), 'Spec. del. Engl.' Series: 63-115. Folder: Gesandtstats-Relationer med bilag fra Bothmer. File: Relationes de Baron Von Bothmer aus London, de 1759. Other material can be found in the British diplomatic correspondence between Walter Titley and Lord Holderness, 23 January, 20 February, 28 February, 26 March, 31 March, 14 April and 9 May 1759, TNA, State Papers, foreign. S.P. 75/105. Sir John Gooderick, Britain's envoy to Sweden was also involved see, Gooderick to Lord Holderness, 13 February 1759, TNA, SP 75/107. Additional material relating to individual vessels can be found in DNA, TKUA (301), 'England Søfart og Handel, Div., Afskrifter 1756-1762.' Series: 63-49-63-50. Folder: England A III, Danish ships seized during the Seven Years' War, 1756-1762.

<sup>55</sup> Tuxen, 'The Danish view of neutrality', p. 222.

<sup>56</sup> Walter Titley, Copenhagen to Lord Holderness, London, 23 January 1759, TNA, State Papers, foreign. S.P. 75/105.

<sup>57</sup> Pares, *Colonial Blockade*, p. 282.

contraband, were to be subjected to the rigours of the British Admiralty courts.

Holderness made it apparent that this was not open for negotiation. Denmark was not in a position to wait however, and both Bothmer in London and Titley in Copenhagen, became engaged in resolving the crisis, despite the fact that it was not in Britain's best interests to do so. Denmark, while not an adversary of Britain's, was an ally of France.

Although involved in the French carrying trade, it was argued that Denmark was not in the same league as the Dutch who had made it their principal West Indian occupation since the beginning of the war.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, given the fact that the Danish colonies produced an abundance of their own sugar, Bernstorff reasoned that Danish merchants would not have the need nor the inclination, to ship French sugars to Copenhagen.<sup>59</sup> As we will see, Bernstorff's attitude reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of the basic economics of the situation. For Danish West Indian merchants and planters, the trade in French sugars, although risky, was quite lucrative. More importantly, it was a necessity. As Klooster has noted, smuggling requires the complicity of more than one party.<sup>60</sup> While merchants in London, Amsterdam, Hamburg and Altona remained willing to trade in French produce, there would be West Indian merchants willing to supply them.

The diplomatic dispute between Denmark and Britain was not resolved immediately and endured until the summer of 1759. A protracted disagreement, of more importance and urgency for Denmark than Britain, it has been discussed at length on several occasions and from various perspectives. Pares has compared the Danish situation to that of the Dutch, concluding that Denmark's status as a minor state allowed Britain to treat it in an offhand manner.<sup>61</sup> This had the effect of increasing Denmark's indignation and served to incite demands from investors for retaliation.<sup>62</sup> Meanwhile, Tuxen has explored the ways in which events moderated Denmark's diplomatic position. He surmised that although the state's basic principles regarding its neutrality did not waiver throughout the war, its decision to neither assert nor repudiate its rights as a neutral nation were indicative of its increasing political isolation in the face of escalating threats from Russia.<sup>63</sup> Finally, Kent has suggested that, far from depending on diplomatic machinations, Danish merchants exercised considerable agency in securing the release of their own vessels through direct negotiation with the British privateers.<sup>64</sup> The following section will investigate this final point in order to highlight the role played by

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<sup>58</sup> Kent, *War and trade in northern seas*, p. 152.

<sup>59</sup> Pares, *Colonial Blockade*, p. 282.

<sup>60</sup> Klooster, 'Inter-imperial smuggling', p. 141.

<sup>61</sup> Pares, *Colonial Blockade*, p. 282.

<sup>62</sup> Fears that Denmark would disrupt British trade and invade Hanover were never realised, see Walter Titley, Copenhagen to Lord Holderness, London, 23 January 1759, TNA, State Papers, foreign, S.P. 75/105.

<sup>63</sup> Tuxen, 'The Danish view of neutrality', pp. 207-32.

<sup>64</sup> Kent, *War and trade in northern seas*, p. 156.

## Nicholas Tuite and the Atlantic sugar trade, 1756-1763

Nicholas Tuite in London, on behalf of his associates in Copenhagen, as the dispute developed during 1758 and 1759. In order to fully understand the importance of his role from a Danish perspective, it will be necessary to examine some of the ships, their cargoes and their routes.

Of particular relevance, is the extent to which the complexity of commercial networks at the Danish islands is revealed. In general, transatlantic voyages from Europe to the West Indies operated on well-established routes, which the ship may have plied for many years. This made sense financially, as captains and the owners of outward cargoes were attracted to locations where they had established contacts. Such measures minimised risk and cost in that a return cargo could be assembled well in advance, thus ensuring a full hold and minimising delay.<sup>65</sup> Accordingly, a number of the ships involved in the dispute were simply going about their usual business when seized by British privateers. This is an important point, because it removes the suggestion that the vessels involved were trading in a haphazard or opportunistic fashion. On the contrary, each cargo was consigned to major merchants in Copenhagen, frequently via their agents in other European cities. Indeed, many of the cargoes can be traced to Irish plantations at St. Croix and Irish merchant houses in London, Copenhagen, Hamburg, Amsterdam and Cork. In effect, the evidence allows an insight into Danish trade networks, together with an insight into how and where they intersected with the interests of the Irish mercantile community.

In Copenhagen, Walter Titley, the British envoy, was coming under increasing pressure to resolve the issue with his home government. Denmark's relatively late foray into large scale colonial expeditions, meant that during this period, both those of high rank and commoners of substance, had invested in West Indian voyages. 'The nobility here, as well as the Merchants, are concern'd in Trade and consequently affected by every disruption of it...' As a result, Britain's failure to take swift action in dealing with the Danish vessels gave 'I fear a fatal blow to our Interests.' The non responsiveness of Holderness to Titley's concerns, led him to declare with exasperation that 'I am really apprehensive that it would determine him [King Frederick V] to take part against us in which case the British Trade and the territories of Hanover would be the immediate objects of Invasion...'<sup>66</sup>

Tuite was particularly associated with the cargo of the *Justicia*, captained by Gregory Talbert Neilson. When seized by the *King of Prussia* privateer, she was taken to

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<sup>65</sup> Ralph Davis, *The rise of the English shipping industry in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (London, 1962), p. 363.

<sup>66</sup> Walter Titley to Lord Holderness, 23 January 1759, TNA, State Papers, foreign. S.P. 75/105.

Deptford on 21 October 1758.<sup>67</sup> As the cargo was laded on Tuite's account, he was responsible for it until it reached its final destination.<sup>68</sup> The owners of the ship were 'Wever & Iselin', close associates of Tuite and one of the largest shipping firms in Copenhagen.<sup>69</sup> The detention of the *Justicia* lasted several months and merchants in Copenhagen were growing increasingly desperate. The *Justicia* was said to have loaded sugars at the west of the island of St. Croix where 'tis well known no French sugars ever come'. As a result, it was claimed that the vessel could not possibly have been involved in any illegal activities. Overall, Tuite was outraged that the court proceedings took so long to get underway. On his behalf, Gooderick, who was Britain's envoy to Sweden, wrote to Holderness and outlined Tuite and Captain Neilson's argument, 'he has not...any one thing on board but what is the Growth of that Island.' He continued to add that, 'this ship belongs to a merchant of consideration and influence here and that the release of it if possible would have a good effect...' He believed that the innocence of the parties involved was beyond question.<sup>70</sup>

When the case finally came before the Prize Courts the following spring, Tuite represented himself. In doing so he had all of the relevant documentation to say that the *Justicia* was indeed Danish and that 'all the cargo was absolutely nothing but the harvest of the Danish Islands...' However, he seems to have glossed over a crucial point that, although all cargo was supposedly Danish, there was some that had been 'taken aboard by the Barques...' <sup>71</sup> As we will see in Chapter four, the use of barques to transport contraband, particularly French contraband, was widespread. Accordingly, the Court called for the vessel to be released but judged that the cargo should be detained and sold. Dissatisfied by the outcome, and aware of the lengthy delays which were likely to ensue before the Appeals Court could make their final judgement, Tuite lodged an appeal.<sup>72</sup> This gave Tuite the time he needed to negotiate directly with the Privateers for the *Justicia*'s release. Within a few short weeks, Tuite announced that he had made an agreement with the Privateers. The *Justicia* was to be released but Tuite was responsible

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<sup>67</sup> See Baron Bothmer, London to Count Bernstorff, Copenhagen, 22 January 1759, DNA, TKUA (301), 'Spec. del. Engl.' Series: 63-115, Folder: Gesandtstats-Relationer med bilag fra Bothmer. File: Relations de Baron Von Bothmer aus London, de 1759; and Baron Bothmer, London to Count Holderness, London, 7 February 1759, TNA, State Papers, foreign, S.P. 75/105.

<sup>68</sup> DNA, TKUA (301), 'England Søfart og Handel, Div., Afskrifter 1756-1762', Series: 63-49-63-50, Folder: England A III: 'Danish ships seized during the Seven Years' War, 1756-1762.'

<sup>69</sup> A brief biography of Weever and Iselin can be found on p. 106.

<sup>70</sup> Sir John Goodricke, Copenhagen to Lord Holderness, London, 13 February 1759, TNA, S.P. 75/107.

<sup>71</sup> Baron Bothmer, London to Count Bernstorff, Copenhagen, 18 May 1759, DNA, TKUA (301), 'Spec. del. Engl.' Series: 63-115. Folder: Gesandtstats-Relationer med bilag fra Bothmer. File: Relations de Baron Von Bothmer aus London, de 1759.

<sup>72</sup> Baron Bothmer, London to Count Bernstorff, Copenhagen, 18 May 1759, DNA, TKUA (301), 'Spec. del. Engl.' 63-115. Folder: Gesandtstats-Relationer med bilag fra Bothmer. File: Relations de Baron Von Bothmer aus London, de 1759.

## Nicholas Tuite and the Atlantic sugar trade, 1756-1763

for the cost of freight which Bothmer said was ‘considerable’ given the ship’s ten month detention.<sup>73</sup>

Tuite negotiated the release of the *Justicia* as having it detained was costing him and the planters a large sum of money. Due to his earlier involvement in the privateering industry, Tuite was likely to have been very familiar with the workings of the Prize Courts. More importantly, his understanding of the business gave him a strong position from which to negotiate release. As a result, he came to be consulted during the dispute by Danish merchants, officials and ship owners on how they should proceed. On 15 September 1758, the *Margaretha*, a ship of two hundred and ten tons, was seized by the privateer *Beckford*, Captain Anthony Athy, and brought into Portsmouth. Held for nine months and three days, her release was secured after successful negotiations with Captain Athy.<sup>74</sup>

In a letter to Reinhart Iselin, Tuite outlined that one captain had ‘compounded’ with the privateer for two hundred pounds. He advised Iselin to do the same for his ship the *Louisa* which was seized en route to Altona.<sup>75</sup> Tuite believed that this was ‘the best way of making an end of these unfortunate affairs...’ and conceded that ‘tis hard that an innocent person should be stopt and detained here so long and instead of receiving any sort of satisfaction for it be obliged to pay costs...’ However, he pointed out that ‘it will be worse to be farther detained a year or two longer before an appeal can be heard before the Lords.’ Tuite added that even if the Court of Appeals found in favour of Iselin and ordered the privateer to pay costs, ‘the owners [of the privateer] in all probability are not worth a shilling so that your property may be locked up a long time and have no remedy...’ A matter of considerable financial consequence, Tuite ended ‘you will reflect seriously on this matter.’<sup>76</sup>

By 15 June 1759, Bothmer was in a position to report that the *Sophie Magdalene*, the *Ville de Bergen*, and the *Christiana Sophia* had ‘all finished their cases in the same manner as the *Justicia* and under the same conditions.’ However, he lamented that ‘this

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<sup>73</sup> Baron Bothmer, London to Count Bernstorff, Copenhagen, 15 June 1759, DNA, TKUA (301), ‘*Spec. del. Engl.*’ Series: 63-115. Folder: Gesandtstats-Relationer med bilag fra Bothmer. File: Relationes de Baron Von Bothmer aus London, de 1759.

<sup>74</sup> DNA, TKUA (301), ‘*England Søfart og Handel, Div., Afskrifter 1756-1762.*’ Series: 63-49-63-50. Folder: England A III, ‘Danish ships seized during the Seven Years’ War, 1756-1762.’

<sup>75</sup> The *Louisa* was seized by the *Hornet* and taken to Dover on 29 December 1758. Tuite was not her agent, accordingly he could not negotiate on her behalf. However, the firm ‘Battier & Zornlin’ of London eventually secured her release on 4 August 1759 see, Baron Bothmer, London to Count Bernstorff, 3 August 1759, DNA, TKUA (301), ‘*Spec. del. Engl.*’ Series: 63-115. Folder: Gesandtstats-Relationer med bilag fra Bothmer. File: Relationes de Baron Von Bothmer aus London, de 1759; see also Baron Bothmer, London to Lord Holderness, London, 7 February 1759, TNA, State Papers, foreign. S.P. 75/105.

<sup>76</sup> Extract of letter from Nicholas Tuite to Reinhart Iselin, June 1 1759, included in correspondence between Sir John Goodricke, Copenhagen and Lord Holderness, London, 19 June 1759, DNA, TKUA (301), ‘*Sp. Del., Engl. A, II, 30.*’ Folder: Breve fra Titley og Gooderick til Lord Holderness, 1759. See also, DNA, TKUA (301), ‘*England Søfart og Handel, Div., Afskrifter 1756-1762.*’. Series: 63-49-63-50. Folder: England A III, ‘Danish ships seized during the Seven Years’ War, 1756-1762.’



## Nicholas Tuite and the Atlantic sugar trade, 1756-1763

is still not the end of our West Indian saga...'<sup>77</sup> Another vessel captured was the *Little Lucie Sophia*, a vessel of three hundred and forty tons, which had been chartered at Copenhagen on 15 November 1757, 'on behalf of his Majesty the King of Denmark.' Her captain, Henrich Jacobson, was ordered to 'carry a full and convenient cargo of such goods as should be put on said ship' and to sail to St. Croix or St. Thomas 'which of the two he should find most convenient.' In an affidavit given by Jacobson to Roger Power, Notary Public in Cork, the captain described how his ship was seized returning from the Danish islands and 'taken by force' by Captain Leary of the privateer *Dragon*. Leary's crew proceeded to open 'every letter they pleased, without folding them up again and threw them and the other papers about in great disorder and confusion.' While Captain Jacobson was being taken to Cork aboard the *Dragon*, the *Little Lucie Sophia* was taken by the privateers on a circuitous route and trailed the *Dragon* by some two days.

The fact that the *Little Lucie Sophia* was a royal ship, whose cargo was destined for the King's coffers, meant that she was not operating within an established mercantile network of associates. Accordingly, she did not have an agent or correspondent who could be contacted in the event of her being seized. Prescient of an impending and potentially severe diplomatic disagreement and aware that he may have to wait several weeks for an agent to be 'designated from Copenhagen', Bothmer reported the issue to Nicholas Tuite. By 7 February, Nicholas Tuite had accepted the case and was dispatched to Cork to negotiate with the privateers. Although Mr. French, the '*l'envoy extraordinaire de Dannemarc*', was based in Cork, Tuite's expertise in negotiation was required.<sup>78</sup> An associate of Mr. French, Tuite spent over a month in Ireland before rectifying the situation.<sup>79</sup>

As the war progressed, the rules of engagement between Britain and the neutral nations became increasingly defined. The diplomatic dispute of 1758-59, which had caused consternation among Copenhagen merchants and nobles alike, was never officially resolved. Instead, Denmark opted to discreetly align its definition of contraband with that of Britain. The politics of alliance that shaped Denmark's foreign policy also influenced its domestic and colonial affairs. This is evident in the way in which Nicholas Tuite was received at court in Copenhagen during the summer of 1760. Although identified as the primary instigator of the general disregard of Danish West

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<sup>77</sup> Baron Bothmer, London to Count Bernstorff, Copenhagen, 15 June 1759, DNA, TKUA (301), '*Spec. del. Engl.*' Series: 63-115. Folder: Gesandtstats-Relationer med bilag fra Bothmer. File: Relationes de Baron Von Bothmer aus London, de 1759.

<sup>78</sup> Baron Bothmer, London to Lord Holderness, London, 7 February 1759, TNA, State Papers, foreign. S.P. 75/105.

<sup>79</sup> Baron Bothmer, London to Count Bernstorff, Copenhagen, 17 July 1759, DNA, TKUA (301), '*Spec. del. Engl.*' Series: 63-115. Folder: Gesandtstats-Relationer med bilag fra Bothmer. File: Relationes de Baron Von Bothmer aus London, de 1759.

Indian customs regulations at St. Croix, he had proved himself to be a valuable asset to the Danish authorities when it came to the administration of the island. His self-styled role as a mediator during the diplomatic crisis of the previous year had proved this. By 1760 Tuite was a man of considerable influence in Copenhagen where he represented colonists at St. Croix in the manner of a local councillor.<sup>80</sup> It was in this light that Nicholas Tuite was invited to attend an audience with King Frederick V on the 22 August 1760, a date which coincided with the sixth anniversary of the Crown's commencement of its administration of the colony.<sup>81</sup> Tuite's trip to Denmark gives an insight into his commercial connections on the continent and the relative importance of the Danish sugar industry.

### **Tuite's journey to Copenhagen**

In order to get to Copenhagen, Nicholas Tuite travelled by coach from London with his friend, associate and attorney, John Baker. Having personally approached Count Bothmar at his residence in London, Tuite and Baker secured passports for themselves, two servants and a German interpreter. Leaving London on July 8 1760, Tuite and his party began their overland journey to Denmark in Hellevoetsluis, The Netherlands on July 13. Published in Yorke's edited edition of *The Diary of John Baker*, the significance of this journey from a Danish perspective has largely remained overlooked.<sup>82</sup>

First, it took place towards the end of the period of protracted negotiations between Denmark and Britain as outlined in the previous section. Tuite had negotiated directly with British privateers in order to secure the release of several Danish ships and his contribution is unlikely to have gone unnoticed by the Danish authorities.<sup>83</sup> Of further significance was the timing of Tuite's visit in terms of the development of the Crown administration of the Danish West Indian colonies. Celebrating its sixth anniversary of its administration of the islands, the Crown was keen to boost its colonial revenue. Accordingly, in 1760, it established the Chamber of Customs which replaced the Chamber of Revenue.<sup>84</sup> It is likely that this strategy was informed by the contents of Clausen's report and was with a view to limiting illegal trading, in particular at St.

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<sup>80</sup> See Tuite's letter regarding the prohibitive duties on provisions at St. Croix, Nicholas Tuite, London to J. E. H. Bernstorff, Copenhagen, 28 November 1760, KB, Manuscript division, NBU 28/11/1760.

<sup>81</sup> While the official date of the Crown's takeover of the island is usually considered to be that of the Royal Resolution of the 28 November 1754, the Danish Chamber of Revenue began its administration of the colony on the 22 August of that year, see Gøbel, *A guide to sources*, p. 50.

<sup>82</sup> In some respects, the journey is represented as a frivolous grand tour, see Yorke, *The Diary of John Baker*, pp. 136-44.

<sup>83</sup> Kent, *War and trade in northern seas*, p. 177.

<sup>84</sup> Hornby, *Kolonierne i Vestindien*, p. 115 and Gøbel, *A guide to sources*, pp. 50-1.

Croix.<sup>85</sup> Given Tuite's involvement and encouragement of such illicit trade, his protestations regarding the dearth of colonial supplies, appear to have been accepted as a reasonable justification for his actions.<sup>86</sup>

From an Irish perspective, Tuite's journey highlights the extent of his business network. Along the way to Copenhagen, and again on his way home to London, Tuite called on a number of towns and cities where he and Baker conducted their business. At The Hague, they were entertained by the Danish envoy, Frederick Henry de Cheusses,<sup>87</sup> who was a fervent supporter of Denmark's right to define the terms of its neutrality. Heavily involved in the dispute with Britain of the previous year, there is little doubt that Tuite and he had much to discuss. Also while at The Hague, Tuite was given a brief audience with the Prince of Orange and later met with leading Dutch statesman, Count Portland and Joseph Yorke, the British Ambassador.<sup>88</sup>

On the 27 July, Tuite's party spent several nights in Hamburg/Altona where, according to Baker, there was much business to attend to. Tuite was also engaged in several business meetings in Flensburg where the party travelled a few days later. Nearing the end of their journey, Tuite's belongings were searched by Danish customs officials at Åtenråde. Given Tuite's encouragement of illicit trade, together with his covert shipping of vast amounts of contraband at St. Croix, there is a distinct irony in the fact that seven pairs of his stockings were seized at the Danish border. Concerned that the stockings, which were new, could have competed with Danish manufactures if sold within Denmark; the officials had them sealed and sent ahead to Copenhagen for Tuite's collection on his arrival there.<sup>89</sup>

Reaching Copenhagen on the 8 August 1760, Baker's diary entries ceased until the 22 August. What occurred during that fortnight is unclear. It is likely however, that Tuite and Baker set to work preparing for the events of the 22 August. On the morning of that day, the pair joined Mr. Iselin for coffee.<sup>90</sup> As was discussed in an earlier section, Nicholas Tuite was an associate of Mr. Iselin with whom he had interests in two of the

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<sup>85</sup> See Olsen and Møller, *Toldvæsenet i Dansk Vestindien*, p. 53.

<sup>86</sup> See for example Tuite's letter to Bernstorff where he refers to 'the greatest scarcity' in foodstuffs at St. Croix. Nicholas Tuite to J. E. H. Bernstorff, 28 November 1760. KB, Manuscript division, NBU 28/11/1760.

<sup>87</sup> John Baker refers to him as 'Mons. Cheussés', see Yorke, *The Diary of John Baker*, p. 137.

<sup>88</sup> De Cheusses diplomatic position was of strategic importance for Denmark. The Hague was one of the principal centres of European diplomacy and there, de Cheusses attempted to influence Britain's position regarding Denmark's neutral trading rights. See, Brika, *Dansk Biografisk Lexikon*, iii, p. 446-7.

<sup>89</sup> Yorke, *The Diary of John Baker*, pp. 139-41.

<sup>90</sup> While Yorke is of the opinion that he was 'Johan Rudolph Iselin', son of the rector of the University at Båle, it is far more likely that it was Reinhart Iselin, one of the largest shipping magnates in Denmark during the eighteenth century. He married the sister of Conrad Fabritius in 1752. See below, p. 106; Yorke, *The Diary of John Baker*, p. 141 and Gøbel, 'Volume and structure of Danish shipping', p. 121.

## Nicholas Tuite and the Atlantic sugar trade, 1756-1763

ships seized during the events of 1758 to 1759.<sup>91</sup> From central Copenhagen, the party travelled north to Fredensborg Palace, where they were met by Count Moltke and Minister of State, J. L. G. Holstein.<sup>92</sup> There, Baker, Tuite and Iselin also spent time with Iselin's brother-in-law, Conrad Alexander Fabritius, of the House of Fabritius and Weever who was a principal stakeholder in the *Justicia*.<sup>93</sup>

Also in attendance was Walter Titley, the British Ambassador to Denmark as was Professor Martin Hübner, author of the tract on the British seizing of neutral shipping.<sup>94</sup> Baron Bernstorff was in attendance as was King Frederick V. After the proceedings, Tuite, Baker and Iselin returned to Copenhagen where they 'ate some eggs and drank 2 bottles Burgundy...'<sup>95</sup> Two days later, Tuite 'drank chocolate with the Imperial Minister', Joachim Wasserschlebe, while Baker transcribed legal material relating to commerce with the Danish islands.<sup>96</sup> Following that, the pair dined and lodged at Sir John Goodricke's residence.<sup>97</sup> Having spent just over a month at Copenhagen, Baker, Tuite and their entourage left the city and commenced their return to London on 10 September 1760. Along their route, they stopped at Flensburg and spent a day or two in Hamburg. In Utrecht, they sold their coach and proceeded to Amsterdam and Rotterdam where they passed a few days until departing for Hellevoetsluis. There, they were delay for over two weeks due to unfavourable winds and stormy conditions. Eventually, Tuite and Baker landed at Harwich on 27 October 1760.<sup>98</sup>

On his return to London, Tuite wrote to Baron Bernstorff in order to thank him for the 'great kindness and politeness' shown him in Copenhagen. In his capacity as merchant and West Indian agent in London, Tuite offered his services to Bernstorff, adding that 'if I can at any time of use to your lordship in this kingdom I hope you will

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<sup>91</sup> The ships were the *Louisa* and the *Justicia*, see DNA, Kommercekollegiet Dansk-Norsk sekretariat (367), '*Diverse sager vedr. Handel og sofart, 1730-1768*' Series: 407-408. Untitled document, January 29 1759.

<sup>92</sup> Brika, *Dansk Biografisk Lexikon*, viii, pp. 37-43.

<sup>93</sup> Conrad Alexander Fabritius (1731-1805) was the son of Michael Fabritius (1697-1746), the first Director of Denmark's Kurantbank and the first Director of the Asiatic Company. Michael established the House of Fabritius & Weever with Minister of State, John Francis Weever in the 1730s. On his death in 1748, his wife Anna Maria Køster married his business partner J. F. Weever. Conrad came to take over the family business and also served as the Director of the Asiatic Company. Under his management, Fabritius & Weever became Denmark's first banking and commission house. Conrad married a daughter of Peter Kloppenburg of Amsterdam while his older sister married Nicholas Tuite's correspondent and associate, Reinhart Iselin. Brika, *Dansk Biografisk Lexikon*, v, pp. 37-39.

<sup>94</sup> Martin Hübner, *De la saisie de bâtimens neutres* (2 vols., The Hague, 1759).

<sup>95</sup> Yorke, *The Diary of John Baker*, p. 142.

<sup>96</sup> Yorke believed this to be Count Dietrichstein. However it is likely to have been Wasserschlebe. A close associate of J. E. H. Bernstorff, he was a director of the newly established Danish West Indian Chamber of Customs. Tuite thanked him individually in a subsequent note to Bernstorff. See, Philip C. Yorke, *The Diary of John Baker* (London, 1931), p. 142; Brika, *Dansk Biografisk Lexikon*, viii, p. 277-78; Nicholas Tuite to J. E. H. Bernstorff. London, 28 November 1760. KB, Manuscript division, NBU 28/11/1760

<sup>97</sup> Goodricke was the British Ambassador to Sweden. Like Tuite, he supported a strategy of negotiation rather than litigation during the diplomatic crisis of 1758-59. See, Goodricke to Lord Holderness, 13 February 1759, TNA, SP 75/107, fo. 20.

<sup>98</sup> Yorke, *The Diary of John Baker*, p. 144.

do me the honour to command me'. However, Tuite also wished to make Bernstorff aware of the dissatisfaction among planters at St. Croix. When he returned to London, Tuite had met with several residents of St. Croix who were 'much discouraged' by the rigour with which the Danish authorities were collecting revenue at the island, given that 1760 had seen such poor harvests. Tuite concluded his letter to Bernstorff in a curious fashion. Instead of requesting that a softer approach be taken by customs officials at the island, Tuite simply informed Bernstorff that he had told the planters that matters would be improved. 'I have taken the liberty of assuring them that there will soon be alterations made that will be agreeable and that things will be put on a better footing for the future.'<sup>99</sup> In response, Bernstorff assured Tuite that all would be taken care of at St. Croix. 'You may depend on it Sir, that we are actually at work here in order to put things upon a better footing with regards to His Majesty's American Islands.' He continued, 'I beg you will be fully persuaded that I shall never be wanting to shew [sic.] you my readiness to be of service to you...'<sup>100</sup>

This communication shows Tuite's position both within society at St. Croix, but also within the Danish sugar trade as a whole. Given his strategic position in London, Tuite orchestrated both the legitimate and illicit Danish sugar trade. Moreover, his knowledge of the British legal system, together with his personal experience in the privateering industry, made him particularly useful to the Danish Crown. In all, he was instrumental in the establishment of a thriving sugar trade at St. Croix. In spite of his disregard of Danish mercantilist policy, Tuite's efforts were greatly appreciated at the court of Frederick V. Indeed, the fact that Tuite was honoured as the founder of the colony would suggest that the trade in contraband was unofficially endorsed by the Danish authorities. Overall, it would suggest that his vision for the development of St. Croix through unrestricted access to colonial trade was a successful one.

As we have seen in his chapter, by the mid-eighteenth century, mercantilism continued to define the official commercial policies of many maritime states. From a British perspective however, as the Seven Years' War progressed, it became increasingly clear that many of its policies could not be enforced. In the meantime, France opted to suspend its enforcement of its *exclusif* to ensure the survival of the French sugar trade. Sensitive to the economic opportunities afforded by such conditions, Denmark encouraged the participation of its subjects in illicit trade with the French colonies. When the Irish merchants became subjects of Frederick V, they achieved

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<sup>99</sup> Nicholas Tuite, London to J. E. H. Bernstorff, Copenhagen, 28 November 1760. KB, Manuscript division, NBU 28/11/1760.

<sup>100</sup> J. E. H. Bernstorff, Copenhagen to Nicholas Tuite, London, 23 December 1760. KB, Manuscript division, NBU 28/11/1760.

### Nicholas Tuite and the Atlantic sugar trade, 1756-1763

neutral status. In the meantime, they maintained their commercial association with the British Empire. This allowed them to trade with and for whomever they wished. As a result, many commercial opportunities existed for merchants who were prepared to take the risk. In order to do so however, they needed knowledge of the commercial conditions as they existed within their prospective markets. As we will see in the following chapter, the Irish merchants at St. Croix traded extensively with Saint Domingue. A complex and high risk pursuit, the merchants relied on their associates in Europe to ensure that they were supplied with low-cost, high quality items which were easily sold at the French island. In addition, the Irish merchants also relied on their European associates to find the best markets for the illegal French sugars they returned to Europe.

## Chapter Four

### The Irish West Indian Sugar Trade

By 1760, St. Croix had yet to become a fully developed sugar producing island. Although a large number of plantation lots were dedicated to the production of sugar, few had been entirely cleared or cultivated. As a result, during the war years, much of the island's under-utilised land became dedicated to sugar production. This rapid expansion of the island's sugar economy is reflected in the Christiansted Customs' Ledgers of 1760. During that year, numerous cargoes of windmill components, distillation equipment and other dry goods were imported into Christiansted in order to supply the demand created by the island's developing plantations. In addition to these cargoes, private traders were also recorded as they imported shipments of slaves both from neighbouring islands, and directly from Africa. While the produce of a mature plantation generally covered any operational expenses, the produce of a new plantation was directed towards the payment of overheads such as mortgages and the investment in slaves, building materials and hardware.<sup>1</sup> Crucially, developing plantations required access to large amounts of capital.

Accordingly, the theme of this chapter relates to the ways in which Irish merchant-planters at St. Croix acquired the additional working capital they needed to develop their plantations. This chapter will also consider the strategies they employed to use this capital as efficiently as possible. Had they adhered to the mercantilist doctrines that governed European shipping during this time, it is unlikely that they could have developed the island's sugar industry as rapidly as they did. The group relied on their associates in European ports, particularly Nicholas Tuite in London, to conduct their commercial affairs as efficiently as possible.

As a result, the Irish merchant-planting interest became heavily involved in the contraband trade with Britain's enemy, France. This trade with the French West Indian colonies was contrary to Britain's 'Rule of '56'.<sup>2</sup> As we will see, the Irish merchant-planters devised ways of circumventing this. In addition to the French trade, there were other shipping patterns associated with this Irish group which were found to be entirely contrary to Danish mercantilist policies. By using their new found Danish neutrality, together with their connections within the British Empire, this group could exploit the best of one and evade the restrictions of another.

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<sup>1</sup> See Baker on this point, LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Joseph Baker, London, 1 January 1756, fo. 92.

<sup>2</sup> This rule is described in Chapter Three, pp. 96-7.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

The Irish merchant-planting interest at St. Croix was involved in both legitimate and illegal trade. Although the legitimate trade in Danish sugars to Copenhagen was steady, it did not provide the opportunities for profit which were available in the French contraband trade. This trade proved to be the most lucrative of all. Because it breached both British and Danish regulations, it was risky. In addition, it was tremendously complex. Its advantages however, far outweighed its inconvenience. As we will see, the besieged markets of French Saint Domingue came to dominate the commercial activities of merchants throughout the West Indian.

In general terms, the Irish associates took advantage of what was known as the 'Northern Route' or the 'Dutch Trade,'<sup>3</sup> and were involved in the illicit shipment of low-cost, high-value manufactures and provisions from northern Europe to the West Indies. Overall, the objective was to keep European purchasing and shipping costs to a minimum so as to maximise profits within the French West Indian markets where a scarcity of such products existed. The profits which resulted were used to purchase local sugar which was then consigned to the European market which offered the best prices. Irrespective of where the sugar found its European market, its sale value was promptly remitted to London via a bill of exchange. There, the West Indian agent could use the money to purchase plantation hardware for use at St. Croix, to outfit a slaving vessel or to send another consignment of European manufactures for sale at the islands.

The following chapter attempts to unravel the evidence of illegal trade presented by the Christiansted Customs' Ledgers of 1760 together with the Admiralty records of that period.<sup>4</sup> I have divided it into five sections. In section one I consider the sources which provide evidence of the evasion of British and Danish regulations. Following this, section two presents the legitimate trade in sugar to Copenhagen and examines the factors that encouraged Crucian merchant-planters to trade illegally. In many respects, the illegal trade with French St. Domingue dominated trade at the Danish island throughout this period. As a result, section three describes the hardware, provisions, linens and slaves that were illegally imported into St. Croix by Irish merchant-planters. Although there was a market for these items at St. Croix, they were predominantly destined for the French West Indian colony of St. Domingue. Accordingly, section four discusses the local trade between St. Croix and St. Domingue and outlines the tricks and deceptions that were necessary to conduct it safely at the neutral Spanish Freeport of Monte Cristi. Finally, section five presents two case studies relating to the vessels the *Saint Croix* and the *Adventure*.

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<sup>3</sup> It is evident that by 'Dutch', commentators were referring to any trade conducted by the neutral nations of northern Europe, see Thomas M. Truxes, *Defying Empire* (New York, 2008), p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> The nature of these sources is discussed in the Introduction, pp. 23-4.



## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

Although these vessels were unsuccessful in their attempts to ship French sugars to Europe, both cases show the way in which British and Irish manufactures were imported into St. Croix primarily for the French West Indian market. In addition, both case studies provide details relating to the ways in which trade was surreptitiously conducted with French St. Domingue via the Spanish port of Monte Cristi. Overall, the *Adventure* and the *Saint Croix* exemplify the illegal intra-imperial commercial transactions that sustained the island of St. Croix and allowed it to develop its sugar industry during the Seven Years' War.

### 1. Sources and evidence of evasion

There have been several studies that consider the extensive smuggling trade that existed between the North American colonies and the islands of the West Indies during the pre-Revolutionary era.<sup>5</sup> However, the illicit trade between the West Indies and Europe has received less attention.<sup>6</sup> Information included in the Christiansted Customs' ledgers suggests that this trade was a significant one and that it was fundamental to the development and expansion of the sugar industry at St. Croix. In this section, I will describe the sources used to detect evidence of commercial evasion and I will show how this information can be used to obtain a greater understanding of the trading conditions at the island.

Although the majority of the Customs' Records for St. Croix have been damaged or destroyed, the customs records for Christiansted relating to 1760 have survived.<sup>7</sup> Information recorded in these documents includes the names of captains, the origin or destination of his cargo, together with the contents and value of the goods. For imported cargoes, the names of the colonists to whom goods were consigned are frequently recorded. Meanwhile, with regards to exports, the names of the colonists who shipped goods to other destinations were also documented. Other surviving records relating to the war years are the Weighbooks for Christiansted which were composed during the years 1761 to 1763.<sup>8</sup> These books only recorded shipments of dry goods which were sold by weight. As a result, they hold less information about entire cargoes than do the Customs' Records. Unlike the Customs' Records however, they never fail to document a

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<sup>5</sup> See for example, Pitman, *The development of the British West Indies*; Pares, *Yankees and Creoles*; Pares, 'Merchants and Planters'; Willis, 'The trade between North America and the Danish West Indies'; Virginia D. Harrington, *The New York Merchant on the Eve of Revolution* (Gloucester, Mass., 1964).

<sup>6</sup> Thomas M. Truxes, 'Transnational trade in the wartime North Atlantic: the voyage of the snow Recovery,' *Business History Review*, 79(2005), pp. 751-80.

<sup>7</sup> NARA, RG 55, Entry 460, Box 877 D, St. Croix Customs Department: Christiansted Office, Customs Journal, 1760. (Hereafter abbreviated as CJC).

<sup>8</sup> Although Weighbooks are extant for several years between 1748 and 1760, many of these are illegible see, NARA, RG 55, Entry 465, Records of the Weighmaster in Christiansted, 1748-1778. (Hereafter abbreviated as WBC).

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

ship's name. Moreover, they give a better idea of the volume of sugars exported from St. Croix during the second half of the eighteenth century. In this way, when used in parallel to the Customs Books, the Weighbooks can contribute to our impressions of commercial patterns in 1760. Despite being composed in gothic Danish script, these records offer a great deal of information regarding the import and export of goods in 1760 and as a result, give an excellent overview of the island's economy during the Seven Years' War.

Similarly, a wide number of documents relating to the question of the legitimate and contraband Danish sugar trade are extant in the British and Danish repositories. While the printed depositions of Prize Court cases are highly informative, the diplomatic correspondence between British and Danish envoys during the late 1750s offers great detail with respect to individual ships, their routes, owners, agents and cargoes.<sup>9</sup> In the following sections, I will use a combination of the above sources to show the ways in which the Irish merchant community in London and St. Croix co-ordinated aspects of the legitimate and illicit sugar trades.

### *Evidence of evasion*

During the war years, St. Croix developed an entrepôt economy which was almost entirely focussed on supplying the beleaguered French colonial market. This economy functioned in parallel to its export trade in Danish sugar and cotton, and it relied heavily on commercial dispensations awarded by the utterly corrupt, but widely popular, Governor Von Prock. Because of this, at St. Croix the trade was considered by colonists and customs officers alike to be perfectly legal. This view changed considerably after the war however, when laws to limit the scale of illegal trading were finally imposed and enforced.<sup>10</sup>

At this time, there appears to have been very few commercial restrictions which were actually enforced at the island. Because of this, merchants at St. Croix had little to hide and so, were not concerned with covering their tracks.<sup>11</sup> Given this, a wide range of commercial activity is recorded in the customs records at Christiansted and the records offer an insight into the nature of trades conducted between St. Croix and the British, French, Spanish and Dutch islands. Although there is bound to have been a good deal of illicit trade that was not documented at St. Croix, the illegal trade that does appear gives an idea of the commercial mechanisms and international networks upon which it was based. Accordingly, the customs records from Christiansted can be considered to be a

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<sup>9</sup> See Chapter Three, pp. 96-104.

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter Five, pp. 172-6.

<sup>11</sup> This is an obstacle to the study of most smuggling enterprise. See, F. G. James, 'Irish smuggling in the eighteenth century', *Irish Historical Studies*, 12(1961), pp. 299-317, p. 301.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

fairly accurate account of the extent of illegal trading within the West Indies during the Seven Years' War.

In other studies of the nature of smuggling, it has been noted that early modern protectionist attempts to control Atlantic trade were simply met with chronic evasion.<sup>12</sup> As a result, in order to understand the ways in which illegal trade operated, it is essential to study the restrictions that were being evaded, together with the nature of the incentives which existed to evade them.<sup>13</sup> Once the motivation to trade in this way is established, it is possible to trace the routes taken by the smuggled item and the methods used to conceal it. Overall, it can be shown that the efforts involved in executing the transaction were directly proportional to the financial rewards gained if successful, 'the farther about will prove the nearest way home, if it come at last with good profits.'<sup>14</sup>

Because the legitimate and illicit trades were conducted in parallel with each other, The Danish Board of Commerce, the *Kommercekolliget*, appear to have been oblivious to the extent of evasion at St. Croix. By 1758 however, merchants at Copenhagen had begun to lodge complaints regarding the unprofitable nature of the provisioning trade to the islands. Commodities sold there tended to sell at a loss and never covered the cost of their freight, nor the return cost of sugar shipments.<sup>15</sup> Initial investigations revealed a number of obvious contraventions of the laws which regulated trade at St. Croix. Several instances of Danish ships, which were chartered by planters at St. Croix, and carried English goods directly from London, were highlighted. Other irregularities related to the regular import of foreign provisions into Christiansted from all regions, which accounted for the Danish products of poorer quality fetching such low prices at St. Croix.

An investigative committee was assembled under the direction of lieutenant colonel Clausen.<sup>16</sup> Its remit was to assess the extent of illegal trade at the island. Beginning their task on the 22 May 1759, they examined all available customs books and official documentation associated with trade at St. Croix from 1755 to 1758. Given that the accounts for 1759 were incomplete, the committee excluded them entirely. Evidence of irregular trade during 1755 suggested the imports of foreign provisions were routinely charged at a mere two point five per cent, instead of the mandatory twenty five percent.

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<sup>12</sup> W. A. Cole, 'Trends in eighteenth century smuggling', *The Economic History Review*, 10 (1958), pp. 395-410, p. 295.

<sup>13</sup> Evan T. Jones, 'Illicit business: accounting for smuggling in mid-sixteenth century Bristol', *The Economic History Review*, 54(2001), pp. 17-38, p. 34.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Mun, *England's treasure by foreign trade or the balance of our foreign trade is the rule of our treasure* (London, 1755), p. 66.

<sup>15</sup> Olsen and Møller, *Toldvæsenet i Dansk Vestindien*, p. 52.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Clausen (1721-1784). Originally a merchant and treasurer for the Danish West India and Guinea Company. He became Governor of St. Croix from 1751 until the Crown takeover in 1754. In 1755 he was made lieutenant colonel at St. Croix and was later promoted to Colonel in 1762. In 1766, when Von Prock was recalled to Denmark, Clausen filled the position of General Governor for three years. See, Brika, *Dansk Biografisk Lexikon*, iii, pp. 632-3.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

In 1756, fraudulent activity included frequent commercial exchanges between St. Croix and St. Eustatius, London and the British Leeward Islands. The books for 1757 were also found to be littered with clear contraventions of Danish law. However, given that the transactions were too convoluted to be intelligible, the committee found it impossible to ascertain which individuals were responsible.<sup>17</sup>

Overall, the committee judged that trade at the island was being conducted without much heed being paid to the respective laws governing commercial transactions. Presenting its report in 1759, it became clear that many ships were supplied not only with Danish paperwork but also with forged foreign paperwork. Goods were routinely landed from England and Holland. Most interesting was the report's findings that French goods were routinely shipped via St. Croix, without paying tax, and were then shipped to foreign locations under the cover of the neutral Danish flag. Concluding that serious offences had been committed, Clausen maintained that such activity was made possible by the extent to which the Custom's officers at Christiansted were prepared to appease individual planters. It was found that several of them were in debt to planters at St. Croix, particularly 'the wealthy English planter, Nicholas Tuite,' who Clausen believed, was 'almost considered to be the true ruler of St. Croix.'<sup>18</sup>

Although concluded in 1759, the commission's report did not have an immediate impact on regulations at the island. However, no new laws were implemented until after the Peace of 1763. As a result, all trade at the island simply continued as it always had in its complete disregard of Danish regulations. Given that the report reflected all aspects of trade from 1755 to 1758, and that its findings were not presented until 1760, it is possible to conclude that trade conducted at St. Croix between 1759 and the end of the war, carried on regardless.

Widespread evasion of both Danish and British regulations is patently clear on examination of the Christiansted Customs Journal of 1760. However, it is not sufficient to merely annotate these transgressions without examining the motivation of such activity. When asked why the planters engaged in evasion at St. Croix, General Clausen concluded that it was 'merely to amuse themselves'.<sup>19</sup> While this may have been the case, other factors were also at play. Evasion of Danish regulations was, in many respects, due to the growth of St. Croix as an unofficial entrepôt for the import and re-export of European goods and French produce.

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<sup>17</sup> Olsen and Møller, *Toldvæsenet i Dansk Vestindien*, pp. 54-5.

<sup>18</sup> Olsen and Møller paraphrase Clausen's report '...Nicholas Tuite – han var nærmest at betragte som den egentlige regent på St. Croix...' See, Olsen and Møller, *Toldvæsenet i Dansk Vestindien*, pp. 56-7.

<sup>19</sup> Olsen and Møller, *Toldvæsenet i Dansk Vestindien*, p. 57.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

### 2. St. Croix and the European sugar trade

In this section I will highlight the legitimate trade in Danish sugar that was conducted by the Irish group at St. Croix. In doing so, I will show that this trade was not as lucrative as the trade in sugars to other European ports, such as Hamburg and Amsterdam, which offered more competitive sugar prices and lower duties. Although London played an important role in Irish sugar shipments to Europe, it was primarily for the invisible services that were available there. Finally, this section will outline the main pattern of the illegal trade as conducted by the Irish community. Overall, I will show how market conditions caused the illicit trade in French sugars to become the dominant pattern of trade at St. Croix during this period.

#### *The pattern of legitimate trade*

As discussed earlier, both Nicholas Tuite and John Kirwan were personally involved in plantations at St. Croix.<sup>20</sup> From the perspective of the legitimate sugar trade, both assisted in securing the most advantageous rates for freight and insurance on the vessels in which they were involved. One such case was that of the *Justicia*, a vessel that was approximately three hundred English tons<sup>21</sup> and was captained by Talbart Nielson.<sup>22</sup> The vessel was owned by the Danish financiers, Fabritius, Weever & Iselin, who formed Denmark's first banking and commission house.<sup>23</sup> This vessel travelled a well-established route and its cargo was routinely shipped on behalf of Nicholas Tuite in London. He was a stakeholder in the vessel and was also the agent for its cargo, as a result he was ultimately responsible for it until it reached its destination.<sup>24</sup>

Although the vessel departed from Copenhagen on its outward journey, it benefited from Tuite and Kirwan's ability to source advantageous rates for freight and insurance in

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<sup>20</sup> See 'Will of John Kirwan'. Composed: no date, Proved: 24 April 1799, TNA, PROB 11/1322, [Image reference: 238] and 'Will of Nicholas Tuite', Composed: 5 February 1772, Proved: 27 November 1772, TNA, PROB 11/983 [Image Reference: 64]

<sup>21</sup> The *Justicia* was recorded as being of 106 commercial lasts. Sizes of ships involved in the Danish trade to the Caribbean and Guinea varied. Until 1867, the carrying capacity of Danish ships was measured in *Kommercelæst* (commercial last). This unit was based on calculating the combined volume and weight, and one commercial last was roughly equivalent to two and a half English tons or five thousand, two hundred Dutch pounds. However, by a secret royal decree, the actual tonnage of Danish ships was under reported in official documentation by around five-sixths. Between the years 1747 to 1807, Gøbel estimates that the average tonnage of a ship involved in the Caribbean and Guinean trade was two hundred and thirty-nine tons, but ranged from thirty-one to five hundred and forty tons. Vessels which sailed via Africa en route to the Caribbean were slightly smaller in size at two hundred and twenty-nine tons, whereas larger vessels were involved in the direct trade between Denmark and the Caribbean, see Gøbel, 'Volume and structure of Danish shipping to the Caribbean and Guinea', pp. 103-31.

<sup>22</sup> CJC, 1 August 1760, fo. 343, # 467 [outgoing].

<sup>23</sup> This was a powerful consortium. J. F. Weever was a Danish Minister for State while Conrad Fabritius was a director of the Danish Asiatic Company. He was also the son of the director of Denmark's *Kurantbank*. His sister later married his associate Reinhart Iselin who was also a close associate of Nicholas Tuite. See, Brika, *Dansk Biografisk Lexikon*, v, pp. 37-9 and Chapter Three, p. 106.

<sup>24</sup> DNA, TKUA (301), 'England Søfart og Handel, Div., Afskrifter 1756-1762', Series: 63-49; 63-50. Folder: Danish ships seized during the Seven Years' War, 1756-1762.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

London. A cargo ship, the *Justitia* carried goods and supplies from Denmark-Norway to the colonists of St. Croix. Like other vessels of this type, it is likely that the *Justitia* carried a mixed cargo of Danish manufactures, provisions and luxury items. As we will see, such cargoes from Copenhagen rarely matched the demands of the colonists and often proved to be unprofitable for Danish merchants. In all, they were only sustained by an official bounty on large cargoes of this kind. In spite of this however, the return cargo of Danish sugar on board the vessel was highly lucrative and was often the produce of Irish planters, such as Henry Ryan, at St. Croix.<sup>25</sup> The sugar returned to Denmark was generally sent in its raw state and served to pay the Crown dues and to fund return cargoes of dry goods. Although this market was a steady one, it proved not to be as lucrative as other European sugar markets.

### *European sugar markets*

Despite the strict mercantilist policies employed by Denmark, there were a number of destinations for Danish sugar other than Copenhagen. Although Copenhagen represented a steady market it was not necessarily the most lucrative. Meanwhile, although London was a good market for British sugar, the duties it placed on foreign sugars were prohibitive. During this period, Amsterdam was a thriving sugar refining hub. The fact that it was a Freeport meant that the duties it placed on sugar imports were small. Moreover, its financial services allowed for the convenient outfitting of ships, the transfer of funds and the extension of commercial credit, if desired. However, it was the port of Hamburg that appears to have offered most advantages to the Irish West Indian merchant. Like Amsterdam it was a Freeport and it offered similar financial services. As we will see, unlike its Dutch counterpart, it had a special relationship both with Denmark and France.

Unlike in the French colonies, no sugar refining industry of any importance developed at the British or Danish West Indies. Although the majority of sugars returned to both Britain and Denmark were in their raw state, and were known as muscovados; the practice of producing clayed sugars was also common. This was a crude refining process where, after the boiling process, sugars were placed in moulds to allow the dark liquid contained within to drain. Following this, they were allowed to cure for several weeks. In the French colonies however, refining technologies were much more advanced and clayed sugar, known as *sucre terré*, was subjected to further baking and processing in order to provide a refined white sugar or *sucre en blanc*.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> CJC, 1 August 1760, fo. 343, # 467 [outgoing].

<sup>26</sup> Noël Deerr, *The history of sugar* (2 vols., London, 1949-50), ii, p. 466.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

There was no desire on the part of the British or the Danish authorities to promote such a colonial industry because it would be to the detriment of their metropolitan sugar refining industries. In addition, because raw sugars were bulkier than refined sugars, they required more room in a ship's hold. Therefore, they were more expensive to ship to Europe. As such, Britain and Denmark encouraged sugars to be shipped in their raw state so as to provide a boost to their shipping industries. As a result of this policy, British import duties on clayed sugar were high in comparison to muscovado and in 1759 duties on clayed British sugars were over one pound sterling per hogshead while duties on muscovados were just over six shillings.<sup>27</sup> If British duties on domestic clayed sugars were high, British duties on foreign clayed and refined sugars were even higher. To import foreign refined sugars into Britain would have cost over four pounds in duties to the Crown.<sup>28</sup> This had the effect of virtually discouraging the practice.

Like Britain, Denmark had no desire to encourage a sugar refining industry at St. Croix. Tuite however, was keenly aware of the advantages of shipping refined sugars from St. Croix which were far cheaper to ship than refined sugars. In 1757 Bothmar, who was the Danish envoy in London, wrote to the Court in Copenhagen with the following remarks

An Irish man named Tuid (sic.) is intent on establishing a refinery in the King's American Islands...His enterprise appears to me extremely dangerous for the refiners of Copenhagen and other of the King's towns (since these islands are the garden from whence they derive their fruits, and which would be certainly consumed by this Irishman)...It seemed to be my duty to report to the Court and to attend orders before giving him even the least favour...<sup>29</sup>

Tuite's request was denied and the refining of sugars continued to be outlawed at the Danish West Indies. As in Britain, the Danish sugar refining industry was a powerful lobby and only muscovados could be legally shipped to Denmark. Moreover, before 1764 sugars could only be shipped to Copenhagen where the sugar refiners who held special Crown privileges operated their industry. By the Seven Years' War, there were a handful of refineries in the city. This ensured that they were constantly supplied with sugars from the colonies. However, there were times where an abundance of sugar imports led to an over-supply of the commodity. This led to a thriving re-export market

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<sup>27</sup> Deerr, *The history of sugar*, ii, p. 467, 430.

<sup>28</sup> Deerr, *The history of sugar*, ii, p. 430.

<sup>29</sup> Bothmar wrote: '*Son entreprise me paroît si dangereuse pour les Raffineurs de Copenhague & des autres Villes du Roy (: puisque ces Isles sont leur Jardin d'ou ils tirent les Fruits, & qui seroient certainement consumés par cet Irlandois:)*...' see, Count Bothmar, London, to Baron Bernstorff, Copenhagen, 2 December 1757, DNA, TKUA (301), '*Sp. Del. Engl. B.*' Series: B. 113, Folder: Gesdantskabs-Relationer.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

in raw sugars to cities such as Hamburg and, to a lesser extent, Amsterdam. On the one hand, the sheer abundance of imported sugar allowed sugar refiners in Copenhagen to purchase the commodity cheaply from the planters at St. Croix. On the other hand, these large sugar factors were in a position to sell on this cheap sugar and to take advantage of the higher prices available on the international market. As a result, this was not a particularly lucrative arrangement for the planters at St. Croix yet allowed many merchants and refiners in Copenhagen to make considerable fortunes.<sup>30</sup>

When compared to conditions on the open market, sugars from St. Croix fetched remarkably low prices in Denmark. Up to the takeover, the planters were at the mercy of the company with regards to prices. After 1755, they had the opportunity to exploit the increased demand which came from the Danish refiners and re-exporters. In this way, official sugar prices in Denmark were informed by negotiations which took place in the West Indies between the local governing councils at St. Croix, the Burgher Council and the Privy Council. Due to the fact that many government officials were themselves involved in planting, prices tended to be negotiated upwards. Because dues to the Crown were paid in sugar, this arrangement allowed the planters some control over how they paid them.<sup>31</sup>

Despite this, in 1757 prices for Danish muscovado sugar were set at six rixdollars per hundredweight and this price remained for the duration of the war.<sup>32</sup> This equated to twenty four shillings per hundredweight and was a low price in comparison to prices fetched by muscovado on the international market.<sup>33</sup> For instance, even in 1760, when a glut on the international market caused the price of raw sugar to fall, the Amsterdam market reached prices of thirty shillings.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, in July of that year, prices in London also reached thirty shillings per hundredweight of muscovado.<sup>35</sup> The legitimate sugar trade to Copenhagen served an important purpose in that it facilitated the payment of Danish taxes and dues. However, given the low prices on offer there it can be appreciated why merchant-planters at St. Croix were keen to explore alternative markets.

### *The port of Hamburg/Altona*

During the Seven Years' War, the commercial boundaries existing between the free imperial city of Hamburg and the Danish port of Altona were blurred. Throughout this period, Hamburg operated under a series of charters conferred on it by the Emperors of

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<sup>30</sup> Sveistrup and Willerslev, *Den Danske sukkerhandels*, pp. 65, 72.

<sup>31</sup> Willis, 'The trade between North America and the Danish West Indies', p. 66.

<sup>32</sup> Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien*, pp. 71-2.

<sup>33</sup> This figure was obtained by using McCusker's currency converter for Danish currency, see McCusker, *Money and exchange in Europe and America*, pp. 80-6.

<sup>34</sup> Deerr, *The history of sugar*, ii, p. 530.

<sup>35</sup> Pares, 'The London sugar market, 1740-1769', p. 269.



## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

Germany, the Kings of Denmark, the Dukes of Holstein and other powers. One of the principal Hanseatic towns, Hamburg's immediate dependence on the Holy Roman Empire was disputed by Denmark. Virtually independent, Hamburg's relationship with Denmark was improved by an agreement of 1736. As a result, trade to the city of Altona was often linked to merchants involved in international trade at Hamburg. This was facilitated by the financial services available at Hamburg, whose specie bank was noted for the 'goodness of its credit and prudent regulations' which was considered to be 'by no means inferior to any even the most flourishing.' Indeed, a good deal of raw Danish sugar was re-exported from Copenhagen to Hamburg via Altona. Although Altona had a small manufacturing base during the period, most foreign commodities were supplied to its inhabitants from neighbouring Hamburg.<sup>36</sup>

A city which was fiercely proud of its neutrality, Hamburg was in a curious position. While on the one hand it was subject to the direction of the German Emperor, on the other, it was bound to pay dues to the Danish crown. When examining the re-export trade in French sugars from Hamburg, it is noteworthy that throughout the eighteenth century, Hamburg developed a special commercial relationship with France. Hamburg's merchants were subject to lower taxes and its mercantile fleet was given preferential treatment at French ports such as Nantes, Le Havre and Bordeaux.<sup>37</sup> While such patterns of trade are beyond the scope of this study, it is likely that the relationship between the port of Hamburg/Altona and France influenced the trading patterns of those involved in the neutral Danish carrying trade.

In light of this, the principal destination for the shipment of French sugars in Danish vessels soon became the Freeport of Hamburg/Altona. In spite of the war, French sugars continued to reach this city which by then, had the largest sugar refining industry in Europe and dominated the Scandinavian and Baltic markets.<sup>38</sup> While Amsterdam was also a Freeport and it became a popular destination for illicit cargoes of sugar, it did not enjoy the special relationship that existed between Denmark, France and Hamburg/Altona.<sup>39</sup> As we have seen, shipping refined sugar to Europe decreased a trader's need for cargo space by over a third which in turn, reduced the cost of freight.<sup>40</sup> Given that Saint Domingue continued to be the main West Indian producer of refined sugar, sugars from that island were in constant demand. Indeed, Hamburg/Altona provided a good market for the French produce. In 1764, one commentator remarked

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<sup>36</sup> Büsching, *A new system of geography*, vi, pp. 371, 469, 65, 394.

<sup>37</sup> Paul Weber, *On the road to rebellion: the United Irishmen and Hamburg, 1796-1803* (Dublin, 1997), pp. 20-4.

<sup>38</sup> JH Clapham et al, eds., *The Cambridge economic history of Europe* (7 Vols. Cambridge, 1941), v, p. 541.

<sup>39</sup> For an example of the many illicit French cargoes that were consigned to Amsterdam see, TNA, HCA 32/258, Ship: *The Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-61.

<sup>40</sup> McCusker, 'The rum trade and the balance of payments', p. 308.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

that between forty and fifty thousand fads of French sugar had been annually arriving at Hamburg for a number of years.<sup>41</sup>

The records reflect three primary routes for the shipment of sugar from St. Croix. First, there was the legitimate St. Croix to Copenhagen route. This was characterised by a simple bilateral exchange of Danish metropolitan goods for plantation produce from St. Croix. As mentioned above, this trade was not always the most profitable route for sugar to take. The second two routes, to Hamburg/Altona and to Amsterdam, were considered by Denmark to be contraband and so, were more complex and involved outward shipments of low-cost goods from London. As we will see, the goods that were shipped from London to St. Croix, found their way to French Saint Domingue, where they were exchanged for French plantation produce. This, in turn, was shipped to the Northern European ports. The profit from their sale was then transferred to Nicholas Tuite or to John Kirwan in London via bills of exchange and funded further shipments of slaves, plantation hardware or further consignments of dry goods for sale on the West Indian market.<sup>42</sup>

### *The pattern of illicit trade*

Although the Irish merchant community in London was involved in the legitimate dry-goods and sugar trades, it also co-ordinated the transatlantic contraband trade to and from the island of St. Croix. Indeed, Tuite organised the shipment of hardware, provisions, fabric and plantation equipment from London to the island. This pattern of trade was illegal, both from a Danish and a British perspective, and served to undercut similar cargoes which had originated in Denmark. There was an international and a local dimension to this brand of illicit commerce and both aspects were highly complex and interrelated.

First there were the outward cargoes of goods from Europe. This was a circular trade and it operated as follows: Irish colonists at St. Croix received deliveries of low-cost, high-quality, British and Irish linens, along with various amounts of Irish salted provisions from their associates in London. Slaves were also imported in this manner and they, like the cargoes of dry goods, were destined to be re-exported. Next, some of the linens found their way to the Spanish islands, such as Puerto Rico, where they were exchanged for silver. Because cash was in such short supply at the West Indies, silver allowed traders to purchase items elsewhere at heavily discounted prices. Following this, caches of silver along with the rest of the linens, provisions and slaves were taken to

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<sup>41</sup> Pitman, *The development of the British West Indies*, p. 170.

<sup>42</sup> As we will see on pp. 142-58, this was the case with Lawrence Bodkin's *Saint Croix*, The Appellant's Case, TNA, HCA 45/3, Lords Commissioners of Appeals [ship *St. Croix*].

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

French Saint Domingue where they were exchanged for French plantation produce at a highly advantageous rate. The French produce was then laded onto neutral Danish ships where it often masqueraded as Danish sugar.

This sugar was then transported, under the camouflage of neutrality, to a Northern European port such as Hamburg. There, an agent of the planters at St. Croix and the merchants in London sold the cargo. The proceeds of this cargo had two distinct objectives. First, it could be invested in the outfitting of a slave ship for Guinea. This was generally conducted by the above agent at Hamburg. Its second purpose was to fund the assembly of a cargo of plantation tools and equipment in London. In order to achieve the latter objective, the residual proceeds from the sale of the West Indian cargo at Hamburg were transferred, often to Nicholas Tuite, by way of a bill of exchange on London. Tuite then arranged for the necessary equipment, along with supplementary linens and provisions, to be laded on board a neutral Danish ship in London. This sailed for St. Croix and on its arrival, the planters received their plantation equipment and the commercial cycle, which was underpinned by the sale of linens and provisions, began again. Later, with the arrival of the cargo of slaves, the planters received what labour they required. Meanwhile, the merchants at St. Croix developed a thriving transit trade and came to supply the French islands with African slaves during the war.

### **3. The illegal trading patterns of Irish merchant-planters at St. Croix**

In this section, I will outline some of the individuals and groups involved in illegal trading patterns at St. Croix. I will also describe the primary commodities which were imported from Europe and will contrast the legitimate dry goods trade with the dry goods trade that was associated with the illegal sugar trade. While mill equipment, tools and distillation paraphernalia were intended for use by the planters themselves, other dry goods such as linens and provisions played an important role. In fact, these were often illegally imported into St. Croix for re-export to the French and Spanish markets. There is evidence that slaves were also imported to St. Croix for the re-export market to French St. Domingue. This section will attempt to outline the origins of these commodities along with their intended markets.

#### *Irish merchant-planters at Christiansted*

There were several commercial groups operating at St. Croix. As a result, several major illegal shipping patterns can be observed in the Customs' Records. Merchants with Dutch, German, North American, French and Spanish connections operated at the island. As a port town, the local economy of Christiansted was sustained by regional and

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

international traffic. Given the obviously weak controls at St. Croix, a motley collection of individuals settled at Christiansted to take advantage of wartime commercial conditions. As a result, the boundaries between the merchant, the planter, the colonial professional and even the governmental official, were frequently blurred. Many individuals at St. Croix were involved in both planting and trading in varying proportions. Others combined a profession, such as the law or medicine, with the small scale buying and selling of merchandise and sugar.<sup>43</sup> By studying the shipments relating to the Irish community at the island, it is possible to gain an impression of those who conducted their business at Christiansted. In addition, the illegal trading patterns within which they operated become apparent.

Individuals such as Laurence Bodkin, one of Baker's quadripartite, who was 'bred a merchant',<sup>44</sup> used St. Croix as a base for his regional and international network of commercial correspondence. As we will see, he owned a number of warehouses at Christiansted and was heavily involved in the slave trade and in the contraband trade with Saint Domingue. Bodkin also invested in his own plantations and shipped his own sugars to multiple markets. Bodkin's West Indian trade was supported by his agent and business associate, Nicholas Tuite in London. Together, they supplied St. Croix with dry goods and slaves throughout the war.

From the Customs' Records, it is evident that Bodkin was a wholesaler at the island who, with his business partners Skerret and Ferral, imported large quantities of items for sale to the general public. Indeed, 'Skerret, Bodkin & Ferral' consistently ordered large cargoes, both for use at the island and for re-export to other regions.<sup>45</sup> This would suggest that they operated under the same terms as firms such as 'Buchanan and Simpson' in the Chesapeake who, as we know from the work of Jacob Price, supplied smaller planters there with European manufactures and the credit and marketing facilities required to sell commodities on the European market.<sup>46</sup>

Other traders at the island included Dr. Andrew Irwin of Strabane, Co. Tyrone, who was a physician who had practiced medicine at St. Croix from at least 1753.<sup>47</sup> Irwin was

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<sup>43</sup> This was certainly the case for John Baker, who was always eager to have extra supplies sent to him at the islands, 'you need not be afraid of sending me out too much, for tis the surest and readiest sale in the world in this place...', LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Brother, London, 8 September 1753, fo. 58.

<sup>44</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 23 January 1750/51, fo. 27.

<sup>45</sup> See the cargo from London of mill equipment, candles, soap and beer which was divided for island use and for re-export, CJC, 31 May 1760, fo. 224, Entry #341[incoming].

<sup>46</sup> Price, 'Buchanan & Simpson, 1759-1763', pp. 3-41.

<sup>47</sup> See database of medical practitioners at the Danish West Indies, Niklas Thode Jensen, 'Undersøgelser af sundhedsvæsenet og lægerne i Dansk Vestindien, 1755-1830', (Ph.D thesis, University of Copenhagen, 2002).

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

also a planter and owned a plantation at the island from as early as 1754.<sup>48</sup> By 1760, Dr. Irwin was also a successful merchant and was involved in numerous, regional and transatlantic trading enterprises which were conducted from St. Croix.<sup>49</sup> As a Presbyterian, Irwin was not a primary member of Tuite's Irish circle. Nevertheless, Irwin partook in a number of Tuite's shipments of goods that originated in London. Individuals who were primarily planters, but who also shipped sugars on their own account, included Henry Ryan, James Cunningham and Edmund McDonough. Such planters were also in a position to order the supplies they needed, also on their own account.<sup>50</sup> Other groups were business partnerships that related to jointly owned plantations and included 'Henry Hunt and O'Donnell' and 'Baker and Ryan'.

There were three kinds of commodities that were of particular value to the islanders. First, plantation tools and equipment were essential in order to develop and improve new sugar plantations. Meanwhile, provisions were essential both for the islanders' personal consumption and for their use as highly tradable commodities at the French colonies. Finally, linens also featured heavily in the cargoes of vessels arriving at St. Croix. Linens, both coarse and fine, were in high demand in a number of colonies at the West Indies. At the Spanish islands, linens were sold for silver, which was in very short supply within the Caribbean region as a whole. The following sections examine the kinds of items imported by Irish planters at St. Croix both from legitimate and illicit sources. Although many items were imported from Denmark as part of the legitimate sugar trade, communication between Copenhagen suppliers and colonists at St. Croix was not well established. Conversely, it is clear from the Customs' Records that Irish colonists were in direct contact with their London suppliers, from whom they ordered a range of items, both luxury and utilitarian.

### *The legitimate dry goods trade*

The legitimate cargo trade operating from Copenhagen failed to meet the demands of the planters at St. Croix. This was due to a number of reasons, one of which was that shipments were simply not regular enough.<sup>51</sup> Even if cargoes did arrive at Christiansted, the Danish manufactures which they contained were often of poor quality, forcing the

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<sup>48</sup> See cartouche on Beck's map of 1754, 'List of sugar planters at St. Croix', Beck, J.M *Tilforladelige Kort over Eylandet St. Croix udi America*. (Copenhagen, 1754 with amendments in 1766) Department of Maps, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

<sup>49</sup> See for example, The Respondent's Case, TNA, HCA 45/3, Lords Commissioners of Appeals [ship *The Adventure*].

<sup>50</sup> These individuals ordered various pieces of plantation and distillation equipment, along with furniture and pistols from London, see CJC, 2 March 1760, fo. 89, Entry # 132 [Incoming].

<sup>51</sup> During the war, the numbers of Danish ships that sailed to the West Indies from Denmark fell to an annual average of 13.6. This can be compared to an average annual figure of 26 before and 23 after the war, see Sveistrup and Willerslev, *Den Danske sukkerhandels*, pp. 48-9.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

colonists to seek goods made in the 'English way'.<sup>52</sup> Overall, the equipment required to develop a plantation capable of competing on the international market was simply not manufactured within the Danish State. Such equipment was widely produced in Britain. Due to Danish protectionist policies, if this equipment were to be imported from Britain by legitimate means, it would have had to have come via Copenhagen. With the addition of customs' duties, the overall cost of these goods would have increased.<sup>53</sup> As a result planters came to rely on the illegal import of British plantation tools.

Legitimate cargoes of dry goods were primarily motivated by commercial interests in Copenhagen. These cargoes were frequently composed of mixed East India goods of high value, such as spices and porcelain and there were often large amounts of other goods such as bread, wine, oil and barrel staves.<sup>54</sup> Cargoes appear to have been ad hoc in nature and goods were rarely assigned to any individual in particular. This can be attributed to the large bounty of five hundred rixdollars that was offered by the Danish Crown on any cargo that was sent to the Danish West Indies and was valued in excess of five thousand rixdollars or one thousand pounds sterling.<sup>55</sup> As a result of this bounty, there was no real incentive to establish a reciprocal trade between Copenhagen merchants and the inhabitants of St. Croix. In this way, large cargoes of assorted goods were shipped to St. Croix and warehoused at Christiansted. There, local officials would attempt to sell them to the general public.

However, these goods were not always sold.<sup>56</sup> One reason may have been due to the fact that the items were not effectively marketed by the merchants in Denmark. This is evident when examining cargoes from Copenhagen in the customs records. Instead of consigning goods to individuals, items were simply checked by officials, and transferred to a general warehouse.<sup>57</sup> In this way, it can be seen that the Danish dry goods trade was driven by the bounty awarded on the cargo's value, as opposed to any particular demand expressed by colonists. This implies a lack of sophistication in the trade between Denmark and its colonies but it also reflects the lack of communication between the colonists and the merchants in Denmark who were charged by the crown with supplying the islands.

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<sup>52</sup> Permission to import goods made in the '*Englesk Façon*' was sought by colonists in the 1750s, see Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien, 1755-1848*, p. 76.

<sup>53</sup> Imports of foreign goods were permitted if such goods were not manufactured in Denmark. Such goods were shipped to Copenhagen and held in a bonded warehouse. However, a transiting tax of 4% was payable before it could legally be shipped to a Danish colony, Olsen and Møller, *Toldvæsenet i Dansk Vestindien*, p. 46.

<sup>54</sup> See for example the cargo shipped by Captain Thomas Wheeler from Christiansted, who entered from Copenhagen in a ship of 73 lasts on CJC, 13 February 1760, fo. 61, # 85 [incoming].

<sup>55</sup> Sveistrup and Willerslev, *Den Danske sukkerhandels*, p. 48.

<sup>56</sup> Complaints regarding the failure of goods to sell led to the investigation into illegal commercial activity at the island in 1759, see Olsen and Møller, *Toldvæsenet i Dansk Vestindien*, p. 52.

<sup>57</sup> See for example Captain Thomas Wheeler's cargo of CJC, 3 April 1760, fo. 61, entry #85 [incoming].

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

In direct contrast were the contraband cargoes which were shipped via London. Recorded in an entirely different fashion to those coming from Denmark, each item contained in the cargo was listed under the name of the colonist to whom it was consigned.<sup>58</sup> In itself, this suggests better communication between colonists at Christiansted and their suppliers in London. It also points to the greater degree of sophistication in this market, and it has been noted elsewhere that, 'as markets grew more complex, commodities were dispatched with greater precision.'<sup>59</sup> These cargoes were the outward shipments of goods that sustained both the illicit trades on the Amsterdam route and on the Hamburg/Altona route.

### *The illegal dry goods trade*

Plantation tools and equipment were essential for the development of a plantation. Indeed, keeping abreast of innovations and new techniques was essential to maintain a competitive edge within the international marketplace.<sup>60</sup> British manufacturers seem to have been responsive to the needs of planters and when John Baker and Henry Ryan needed a new sugar mill they engaged the services of John Welsh, 'a very ingenious sagacious (but illiterate) mechanic' who resided at Nevis. His design was for a new kind of cattle-mill which, due to its design was just as productive as a wind mill but required fewer cattle to run than a standard cattle mill. Overall, Baker was impressed with its construction noting that, 'the ffabrick of it is so lasting...to be capable of being broke or disordered for a vast number of years...'<sup>61</sup> John Welsh had spent several years perfecting the mill with his father in Kent who was also a millwright and iron monger. As a result, when Baker went to order one, Welsh sent his younger brother back to England to ensure that it was constructed to Baker's specifications. Payment for the mill was then to be collected from Nicholas Tuite in Lime Street, London.<sup>62</sup>

This seems to have been the way in which planters at St. Croix ordered and paid for their sugar mills. Mill axels and mill casings appear to have been most in demand, with sugar boiling and distillation equipment also featuring regularly in the Customs' Books. The customs' ledgers show that in general, slave food, barrel bands, staves and construction material such as shingles were illegally imported into St. Croix from North

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<sup>58</sup> In contrast to Captain Wheeler's cargo, see that of Captain Hans Pieter Lucas (Luers) who entered from London on 2 March 1760, CJC, fo. 89, Entry #132 [Incoming].

<sup>59</sup> John J. McCusker and Kenneth Morgan, eds., *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 4.

<sup>60</sup> Sheridan, 'Samuel Martin', pp. 126-39.

<sup>61</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Croix to Nicholas Tuite, London, 30 July 1752, fo. 47.

<sup>62</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Croix to Thomas Baker, London, 28 July 1752, fo. 47.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

America.<sup>63</sup> For instance, on 8 February Skipper Harris of Boston in his thirty ton barque entered with forty seven barrels of mackerel, forty five barrels of Indian meal, six hogsheads of fish and five of ships' bread.<sup>64</sup> A similar cargo was that of Edward Welsh who arrived in his snow<sup>65</sup> from Salem bringing quantities of staves, nails, turpentine and rice.<sup>66</sup> Like the cargoes from Copenhagen, the North American cargoes did not tend to assign their goods to any one individual in particular. This kind of cargo represents the degree to which opportunistic trading took place at St. Croix. However, while this kind of trade sustained the colony in a number of essential goods, it did not supply the kinds of mill equipment and hardware that was required by the planters to develop their land.

An example of a large outbound cargo, from London to St. Croix, is that which arrived at Christiansted in early March 1760.<sup>67</sup> Although the vessel departed from the Danish port of Altona,<sup>68</sup> the fact that it called at London en route to St. Croix, means that it was an illegal shipment. Captained by Hans Pieter Lucas, the ship which was approximately two hundred tonnes in size contained an array of plantation hardware, linens, provisions and assorted luxury items. The primary recipients of the goods at St. Croix were 'Bodkin, Skerret and Ferral' and the sheer quantity of items included in their order, suggest that they may have been importing plantation equipment as wholesalers at the island. The equipment they ordered was listed in the Christiansted Customs books and included a large amount of sugar distillation equipment, several wheel barrows, thirty six sugar skimmers for use in the boiling of sugar and a number of sugar mill axels and casings.

In this shipment alone, 'Bodkin, Skerret and Ferral' imported mill equipment and distillation paraphernalia worth over £1170 sterling. Meanwhile, in the same shipment from London, James Cunningham imported one killdevil pan and three copper sugar boiling kettles valued at one hundred and six pounds. Henry Ryan imported two sugar boiling pans with lids, and the equipment for a sugar mill which included four sugar mill axels and casings, all of which cost him almost two hundred pounds.

In another shipment that reached Christiansted on 31 May, Johannes Suhm entered from London in a brig of over one hundred tonnes.<sup>69</sup> In this cargo, Suhm carried additional mill equipment for several planters. Among the goods imported for

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<sup>63</sup> Willis has documented the importance of the North American trade to St. Croix during this period, Willis, 'The trade between North America and the Danish West Indies', pp. 24-68.

<sup>64</sup> CJC, 8 February 1760, fo. 54, # 76 [incoming].

<sup>65</sup> A Snow 'is generally the largest of all two-masted vessels employed by Europeans, and the most convenient for navigation...' see, William Falconer, *A universal dictionary of the marine...* (London, 1769).

<sup>66</sup> CJC, 12 June 1760, fo. 270, # 393 [incoming]

<sup>67</sup> CJC, 2 March 1760, fo. 89, #132[incoming]

<sup>68</sup> Altona was a suburb of the Freeport of Hamburg.

<sup>69</sup> CJC, 31 May 1760, fo. 234, # 341 [Incoming]



## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

Christopher McEvoy were the components for a windmill and other plantation hardware valued at just below one hundred and seventy pounds. Some planters did not import a large amount of equipment: John Baker and Henry Ryan imported iron goods worth over eighteen pounds, while Thomas Callenan imported killdevil equipment but worth just under two hundred pounds. Meanwhile, the wholesalers 'Bodkin, Skerret and Ferral' imported a large amount of sugar mill material to the value of just under five hundred pounds. However, this order appears to have been items, such as individual mill axels, iron rods and sheet metal which would suggest that they were ordering spare parts for sale at St. Croix.

Plantation equipment came from London because an ironworking industry had developed to supply the demands of the British market. Britain's experience in sugar planting ensured that, unlike in Denmark, plantation technology was easily accessible. Particularly long lines of credit were also associated with this industry and commission agents such as Tuite tended to build relationships with individual craftsmen.<sup>70</sup> Planters, such as Tuite, with good contacts in London, could order what they needed and receive it in a matter of weeks.

### *Provisions*

Customs' Records for 1760 show that provisions were routinely imported for re-export and were thus subject to a rate of two point five per cent. Unlike the cargoes of tools and mill equipment, which tended to originate in London, the largest cargoes of provisions to St. Croix originated in Cork. Although Denmark struggled to increase its production of salted provisions, the commodity tended to be poorly prepared and was often rancid by the time it reached its destination.<sup>71</sup> Irish provisions on the other hand were in high demand at St. Croix, both for local consumption, but also because Irish salted provisions were highly saleable commodities at other islands. During the War of the Austrian Succession Nicholas Tuite, who operated from London, co-ordinated shipments of Irish provisions from Cork to the West Indies.<sup>72</sup> Due to concerns that these provisions were finding their way into the hands of the French, a series of embargoes on the shipments of the commodity, were imposed and lifted on several occasions. This was also the case during the Seven Years' War.

During this period, there was also a growing French demand for salted Irish provisions. As the plantation monoculture continued to expand at the French West

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<sup>70</sup> Jacob M. Price, *Capital and credit in British overseas trade* (Harvard, 1980), p.118

<sup>71</sup> Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies*, p. 404.

<sup>72</sup> Lord Justices (Newport and Boyle) to Earl of Chesterfield, 27 September 1746, PRONI, State Papers, Ireland, Bundle 409, # 2611, fo. 33.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

Indies, little land remained for the cultivation of staple crops and dependence on European supplies increased. While the main consumers of Irish provisions in the British West Indies were the European settlers, at the French islands it was the slave population. This was due to the French *Code Noir*, which stated that planters were to supply their slaves with a weekly allowance of two pounds of salted beef. Frequently, the Irish meat shipped to the French colonies was ‘small beef’ or offal from old cows or bullocks that was two shillings cheaper per hundredweight.<sup>73</sup>

In many ways, Ireland’s salted provisions industry helped to sustain the navies and merchant fleets of Europe from the mid seventeenth century. At the hub of this trade was the port of Cork, where producers cured and packed butter, beef, pork and fish for colonial markets. Firkins of salted butter and hogsheads of salted meat and fish left Ireland in large quantities throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>74</sup> Associated products, such as tallow, candles and hides were also in demand.<sup>75</sup> In the period before 1775, Ireland remained the principal supplier of salted provisions to the West Indies.<sup>76</sup>

During peacetime, French ships from Nantes and Bordeaux carried supplies of Irish provisions to the colonies.<sup>77</sup> Throughout the Anglo-French wars however, the supply of Irish foodstuffs to French colonies was at odds with the general British policy of blockade. As a result, between 1740 and 1778, twenty four embargoes were placed on the shipment of Irish provisions to the West Indies. Although all were lifted after short periods of time, there was a wide consensus that, instead of limiting French access to the commodity, it simply increased it.<sup>78</sup> This was due to neutral Dutch and Danish traders who were prepared to ship the contraband provisions from Ireland for lucrative war-time profits. As a result, the French came to rely on neutral Dutch and Danish traders to sustain their West Indian colonies throughout the Seven Years’ War.<sup>79</sup>

Direct importation from Ireland was illegal under Danish law, but a ‘dispensation’ was given by the governor of St. Croix on 23 June 1756. In it, Irish provisions could be imported should it be found that there was a scarcity of food at the island.<sup>80</sup> Following this date, this dispensation was used as a justification to import salted foodstuffs on a regular basis, whether a scarcity existed or not. This is evident from the customs’ ledger of 3 April 1760 where the wholesalers ‘Skerret, Bodkin and Ferral’ imported beef,

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<sup>73</sup> Bertie Mandelblatt, ‘A transatlantic commodity: Irish salt beef in the French Atlantic World’, *History Workshop Journal*, 63(2007), pp.18-46, p. 28.

<sup>74</sup> R. C. Nash, ‘Irish Atlantic trade in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 42(1985), pp. 329-56.

<sup>75</sup> David Dickson, *Old world colony: Cork and South Munster 1630-1830* (Cork, 2005), pp. 141-2.

<sup>76</sup> Truxes, *Irish-American trade, 1660-1783*, pp. 147-69.

<sup>77</sup> Charles M. Andrews, ‘Anglo-French Commercial Rivalry, 1700-1750: The Western Phase, II’, *The American Historical Review*, 20(1915), pp. 761-80, p. 763.

<sup>78</sup> Mandelblatt, ‘A transatlantic commodity’, p. 29.

<sup>79</sup> Pares, *War and trade in the West Indies*, p. 326.

<sup>80</sup> Sekreterådsprotokol St. Croix, 22 April 1756, DNA, Microfilm, S14.515.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

butter, candles, tallow and tongue to the value of just under two and half thousand rixdollars, or four hundred pounds sterling. The Irish consortium declared the items for re-export, which meant that they paid a reduced duty of two point five percent import tax. Others, such as John Bradshaw and Christopher McEvoy, also had a large amount of beef, pork and butter consigned to them which they too declared for re-export. If a scarcity did indeed exist on the island, the fact that this group were prepared to re-export the goods would suggest that they were not affected by it.<sup>81</sup>

Regardless of whether scarcity existed or not, other shipments of provisions frequently entered the port of Christiansted without enacting the dispensation of 1756. On 3 July 1760, Skipper Johan Houser delivered a valuable cargo of provisions from Ireland for Dr. Andrew Irwin. Worth in excess of fourteen hundred pounds sterling, Irwin's order consisted of three hundred and four barrels of beef, four hundred and ten barrels of herring, forty barrels of pork and two hundred and sixty five cases of candles. All were declared for re-export and charged two point five per cent. As we will see in a subsequent section, Irwin was involved in the contraband trade with the French islands. This entry suggests that he intended to stockpile his provisions for this purpose.<sup>82</sup>

### *Linens*

While plantation hardware was the primary commodity imported from London, many traders also imported fabrics from the British capital. Linens were ideal as a secondary commodity and were used for bartering and exchange at the French and Spanish islands. This low volume, high value commodity was shipped by Tuite to St. Croix in order to take advantage of British bounties on the commodity. As the Irish merchant community in London represented the interests of linen manufacturers in Ireland, Tuite took advantage of the range of bounties and commercial privileges offered by the 1745 Linen Bounty Act.<sup>83</sup> This Act was designed to encourage the re-export of Irish linens from outports in England and served to increase the production and sale of Irish and British linens to the colonies. On the one hand it encouraged colonial dependence on metropolitan manufactures while on the other it made Irish and British linen so cheap that it effectively eradicated German and Dutch competition.

During this period, linen manufacturing was widespread throughout Ireland.<sup>84</sup> In his business and personal dealings, Nicholas Tuite was most associated with counties

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<sup>81</sup> CJC, 3 April 1760, fo. 149, # 197 [incoming]

<sup>82</sup> CJC, 3 July 1760, fo. 295, # 438 [incoming]

<sup>83</sup> Truxes, 'London's Irish merchant community', pp. 271-310.

<sup>84</sup> Although the 18<sup>th</sup> century production of linen in Ireland is most associated with the most northern counties, the counties of Monaghan, Louth, Cavan, Roscommon, Longford, Meath, Westmeath, Mayo and Cork were also important centres for the weaving and spinning of flax, see Louis M. Cullen ed., *Insights*

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

Westmeath and Longford, from where his ancestors came. There, the producers of Longford, Ballymahon and Granard held regular linen markets of varying sizes, while other locations such as Tyrellspass and Mullingar were the sites of substantial bleachers' yards. In 1760, Robert Stephenson remarked that the producers of Longford 'were remarkable for good yarn', and that the linens produced there were 'a degree finer and thinner than what is made in the Counties to the Southward.' In addition, these fabrics were 'very neat threaded and cheap, compared with other counties or foreign linens.'<sup>85</sup> A large part of the linens produced in Westmeath were exported to the colonies and as a direct result of the desire to supply foreign markets, weavers in Westmeath were given 'samples of foreign linen to be imitated,' which were displayed in public places for all to see.<sup>86</sup> Overall, the manufacture of linen in Ireland was greatly encouraged by the bounties and the industry flourished throughout the eighteenth century. Linen was produced in Ulster, north Leinster, some areas of Mayo and Sligo and in southern Co. Cork. However, the ability of Dublin merchants to finance the marketing of the cloth to England made the Dublin Linen Hall the destination of choice for drapers and buyers alike.<sup>87</sup>

Under the scheme, the bounty allowed exporters of British linens to recoup ½ d. on linen valued at less than 5d. per yard, 1d. on linens valued from 5d. to 6d. per yard, and 1½ d. on linens valued from 6d. to 18d. per yard. As a result, the overall cost of British and Irish linens fell by between 8⅓ percent per yard and 25 percent per yard. One of the conditions of the Bounty Act was that 'no Irish Linen exported from Great Britain shall be entitled to the Bounty, unless the Property of some Person resident in Great Britain or America.' This encouraged a large number of Irish merchants to establish themselves in London and to turn their attentions to the linen trade.<sup>88</sup> Thus, London merchant houses frequently bought Irish fabric directly from their associates in Dublin thereby sustaining their connection to Ireland.

As described above, Irish linens which were eligible for the British bounty were between eight and twenty five percent cheaper if shipped to the British colonies via London. However, the British authorities balanced this privilege with stiff re-export duties of four and half per cent at the British West Indian colonies. Thus cheap Irish

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*into Irish history, the rise of the Irish linen industry* (Dublin, 1972), p. 5. During this period, there were pockets where linen was produced throughout the island of Ireland. For instance, in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, the Ffrench family of Monivea, Co. Galway established a thriving linen industry in that locality. By the 1770s, they operated 96 looms and 376 spinning wheels on their estate see, J. G. Simms, 'Connacht in the eighteenth century', *Irish Historical Studies*, 11(1958), pp. 116-33, p. 131.

<sup>85</sup> Robert Stephenson, *The reports and observations of Robert Stephenson, made to the Right Hon. and Honourable the Trustees of the Linen Manufacture, for the years 1760, and 1761* (Dublin, 1763), pp. 8-81.

<sup>86</sup> Stephenson, *The reports and observations of Robert Stephenson*, pp. 77-9.

<sup>87</sup> Cullen ed., *The rise of the Irish linen industry*, p. 4.

<sup>88</sup> Truxes, *Irish-American trade*, p. 177.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

linen became even cheaper when the bounty was applied. When Tuite shipped it to the Danish West Indies instead of to the British West Indies, the linens became even more valuable to the colonists at St. Croix.

Although there was a good deal of linen imported legitimately from Copenhagen,<sup>89</sup> much of this was Danish or German. Because there was no comparable bounty given by the Danish Crown on these linens, they could not have been able to compete with the Irish and British linens that flooded the St. Croix market. Some of these illicit shipments were quite substantial. In March 1760, 'Skerret, Bodkin and Ferral' imported one hundred and twenty eight yards of fabric from London. Meanwhile, in the same shipment, Christopher McEvoy imported a large quantity of hollands and oznabrucks along with twenty five yards of white Irish linen and several different kinds of cottons and cambricks.<sup>90</sup> The following May, David Irwin also imported a large quantity of fabrics from London. Among these were several types of Irish linens, brocades, cottons and silks.

Overall, the trade in Irish linens and other fabrics was widespread at St. Croix and fabrics often formed part of illicit cargoes to Saint Domingue and other colonies which were exchanged for local plantation produce. As we will see, the bulk of these fabrics were destined for the Spanish market where they could be sold for silver. Silver was a commodity much in demand and allowed traders to make cash purchases which formed the basis of the slave trade. In 1760, Jamaican merchants noticed a marked decline in the amount of silver circulating within their island's economy. This was attributed to the large volume of illicit North American trade which was taking place at Monte Cristi.<sup>91</sup> There, the Americans exchanged lumber and other supplies for cash which could then be used to purchase other goods elsewhere, namely large quantities of sugar at the French colonies.<sup>92</sup> The following year, Nicholas Tuite also noted the scarcity of silver at St. Croix.<sup>93</sup>

Oldendorp noted the importance of silver to the local economy when he observed that the fabric trade with Puerto Rico supplied St. Croix with 'gold and silver money with which they buy dry goods, such as varieties of linen, including osnabruck...' At St. Croix, he continued, 'Spanish money is highly esteemed...because payments can be

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<sup>89</sup> See CJC, 13 February 1760, fo. 61, # 85 [incoming]

<sup>90</sup> CJC, 2 March 1760, fo. 89, # 132 [incoming]

<sup>91</sup> As we will see, this was a neutral Spanish free port located on the border between French Saint Domingue and Spanish Santo Domingo. It was especially popular with North American traders and those involved in the illicit French sugar trade see, Truxes, 'Transnational trade in the wartime North Atlantic', pp. 751-80.

<sup>92</sup> Pitman, *The development of the British West Indies*, p. 153.

<sup>93</sup> Nicholas Tuite, London to I. Wassersleben, Copenhagen, 4 December 1761, KB, Manuscripts Division, NKS 2152 4° c

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

made with it in other countries...'<sup>94</sup> This trade with Puerto Rico was in keeping with the commercial routes of Jamaican merchants and traders. It was estimated that in 1750, Jamaicans exported over one hundred thousand pounds sterling worth of goods to Spanish America, most of which was paid for in coin. This served to sustain that island's internal commerce, and also allowed for annual shipments of bullion to England.<sup>95</sup> Because of its size, silver was easily concealed. This made it very suitable for the kinds of illicit trading that was being conducted in the region during the war. Not considered as a commodity in itself, silver was not entered in the Customs' Books. However, it is possible to surmise that vessels that left Christiansted for Puerto Rico, carrying large amounts of linen, returned to St. Croix with silver coin.

An example of the re-export trade in British and Irish linens is that conducted by Captain Kennedy in May 1760 whose cargo was composed of British linens, the majority of which had come directly to St. Croix from London on 1 March.<sup>96</sup> For Mathew Farrell, Kennedy shipped a large cargo of Irish linen, worth just under one hundred pounds, to Puerto Rico.<sup>97</sup> Composed of cottons, bandanas, damask and silks, Farrell's shipment included several dozen pairs of silk stockings and gloves. For William Ledwith, Kennedy also shipped one hundred yards of oznabrock, cottons, linens, and forty dozen hats worth over sixty pounds to Puerto Rico. Meanwhile, in the same shipment, Christopher McEvoy shipped twenty five yards of Irish linen and two yards of cotton worth around ten pounds.<sup>98</sup> Having cleared for Puerto Rico on 12 May, Kennedy returned on 24 May.<sup>99</sup> His cargo was not recorded however. This would suggest that he had sold his outbound cargo and returned in ballast and it is quite possible that he made his returns to Ferral, Ledwith and McEvoy in silver.<sup>100</sup> In all, Kennedy shipped a number of cargoes of linen to Puerto Rico in 1760.<sup>101</sup>

### *Slaves*

During the Seven Years' War, the bulk of the slave trade at St. Croix was organised by private merchants. As a result, there are no reliable figures to quantify the magnitude of the trade. Overall, the Danish West Indian tax-rolls show that between 1755 and

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<sup>94</sup> Oldendorp, *History of the mission of the Evangelical Bretheren*, pp. 146-7.

<sup>95</sup> Pitman, *The development of the British West Indies*, pp. 152-3.

<sup>96</sup> CJC, 1 March 1760, fo. 89, #132 [incoming]

<sup>97</sup> The Christiansted Customs Officer calculated this sum to be 487 rd 50sk Danish current money of St. Croix, which gave an approximate rate of £1 local British currency to 5 rd local Danish currency.

<sup>98</sup> CJC, 11 May 1760, fo.180, # 260 [outgoing]

<sup>99</sup> Kennedy's return on 24 May is mentioned in the Customs Journal as he embarked on a subsequent voyage to St. Eustatius, see CJC, 31 May 1760, fo. 203, # 304.

<sup>100</sup> The phenomenon of sailing in ballast when a ship's return cargo was made up of silver was particularly noted in Jamaica. See Pitman, *Development of the West Indies*, pp. 153-4.

<sup>101</sup> See for example, 13 April 1760, fo. 159, # 204 [incoming] and CJC, 8 July 1760, fo. 295, # 410.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

1765, the slave population at St. Croix increased by six thousand eight hundred and two.<sup>102</sup> This reflects a thriving trade in slave imports which, it is said, was likely to have relied on the slave trades of other nations.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, during this time it was said that the British were ‘proprietors of the best plantations, and in possession of the slave trade.’<sup>104</sup> As we have seen however, the concept of nationality was a flexible one, particularly among erstwhile British subjects who resided as neutral Danish subjects at St. Croix. Indeed, port records suggest that the slaving vessels that served St. Croix operated within a number of imperial jurisdictions.

As is evident from the port records of 1760, colonists imported their slaves either from the Coast of Guinea or from another West Indian island. An invaluable source of information regarding the trade at St. Croix is the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database.<sup>105</sup> While its authors agree that some aspects are incomplete, it is possible to use the information it contains to extract further data from other Danish records, such as the Weighbooks. As mentioned above, the Weighbooks from Christiansted are more detailed than the Customs’ ledgers in their descriptions of ships and captains. In both cases however, information regarding ships, crews and cargoes is occasionally omitted. As a result, by combining the data from the Database with data from the Christiansted Weighbooks and Customs’ Ledgers, it is possible to make deductions relating to individual slaving vessels, their captains and their routes.

In this way, some aspects of the structure of the Danish slave trade during this period can be revealed. This is done by correlating the incomplete data included in a number of sources. For instance, in the Database, Captain Dacuna is listed as having arrived at St. Croix on 19 March 1759 with a total of two hundred and thirty three slaves.<sup>106</sup> It is likely that this is the same Captain Dacuna who is registered in the Christiansted Customs’ Ledger the following year as having cleared for Amsterdam on 9 June 1760 with a shipment of French sugar from Cap François on behalf of a number of planters at St. Croix.<sup>107</sup> This could suggest that these planters ordered Dacuna’s consignment of slaves out of the proceeds of a previous shipment of French sugars that they had sold at Amsterdam. There, Dacuna’s vessel would have been outfitted for the Coast of Guinea where he would have secured another cargo of slaves.

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<sup>102</sup> Sveistrup, *Bidrag til de tidligere Dansk-Vestindiske øers økonomiske historie*, p.15.

<sup>103</sup> Green-Pedersen, ‘The scope and structure of the Danish Negro slave trade’, p. 150.

<sup>104</sup> P. Hansen, ‘Letters, narratives, laws and comments bearing on the Danish West Indies’, *The Journal of Negro History*, 2(1917), pp. 289-290, p. 296.

<sup>105</sup> David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson and Herbert S. Klein, eds., *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM* (Cambridge, 1999).

<sup>106</sup> Eltis, *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, Voyage ID: 19812; Unique ID: 35335.

<sup>107</sup> Among them was Dr. Alexander Moir, a Scot who was originally of the parish of Mortlick, Bansire. He died in 1766, leaving a ‘considerable fortune’ to his family and a sum of money to his alma mater, King’s College, Aberdeen see, *The Scots Magazine*, Vol, 28, November 1766, p. 615. See also, CJC, #307 [outgoing], fo. 236.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

Similarly, in the Database, the *St. Thomas* is listed as having made two voyages from Christianborg to St. Croix in 1757 and 1761, carrying cargoes of two hundred and seventy seven slaves and two hundred and eighty five slaves respectively.<sup>108</sup> It is likely that this is the same *St. Thomas*, captained by Axel Holm, that returned to Copenhagen on 3 July 1762 with a cargo of one hundred and six fads of sugar on behalf of 'Woodt and De Windt'.<sup>109</sup>

Elsewhere, the Database shows that the *Aletha*, captained by Alex Thomson arrived at St. Croix on 3 August 1760 carrying two hundred and four slaves.<sup>110</sup> Two years later, the Database records Thomson entering St. Croix on 1 March 1762 with a cargo of four hundred and three slaves.<sup>111</sup> Meanwhile, Weighbooks of Christiansted for that year show that the *Aletha*, captained by Alex Thomson, cleared for the Norwegian town of Arendal in early July. So, having landed his cargo of slaves, Thomson spent some time composing a return cargo for Copenhagen.<sup>112</sup> He then departed four months later with a cargo of four hundred and ninety one hogsheads of sugar, sixty of which belonged to Henry Ryan.<sup>113</sup>

### *The transiting trade in slaves*

A transiting trade in slaves has also been identified as a significant industry at St. Croix, particularly during the war years. Estimates suggest that between 1733 and 1792, some two hundred slaves per year were re-exported from St. Croix and that this figure was likely to have been higher during the war years.<sup>114</sup> An examination of the data available for 1760 reveals this to be true. In that year, Lawrence Bodkin alone re-exported at least two hundred slaves to French St. Domingue. The Customs' Records show that Lawrence Bodkin was one of the principal slave traders at St. Croix. Not only did he import slaves for use at the island, he was also involved in the transiting trade of Africans to French St. Domingue. As we will see in section five, Bodkin shipped large numbers of slaves to the French colony in return for French plantation produce.

On 7 January 1760, Duncan Campbell entered the port of Christiansted from the Coast of Guinea with a cargo of three hundred and thirty three slaves for Lawrence

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<sup>108</sup> Eltis, *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, 1757: Voyage ID: 19810; Unique ID: 35333 and 1761: Voyage ID: 19815; Unique ID: 35338.

<sup>109</sup> See CWB, Vol. 12, Entries 355 to 360, 1 July to 3 July 1762.

<sup>110</sup> Eltis, *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, Voyage ID: 19813; Unique ID: 35336.

<sup>111</sup> Eltis, *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, Voyage ID: 19816; Unique ID: 35339.

<sup>112</sup> Turnaround times varied at Christiansted. In 1760, it was common for a slaving vessel to remain at the island for around four months see for example, CJC, # 307[outgoing], fo. 236. In 1767, the *Fredensborg* remained a mere 67 days at the island see, Leif Svalsen, *The slave ship Fredensborg* (Bloomington, 2000), p. 144.

<sup>113</sup> WBC, Vol. 12, entry # 82, 15 April 1762.

<sup>114</sup> Green Pedersen, 'The History of the Danish Negro Slave Trade, 1733-1807', p. 203.



## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

Bodkin and Henry Ryan.<sup>115</sup> However, the cargo of slaves were not allowed to come ashore immediately and remained on board in the harbour for just over a fortnight. It is possible that this delay was due to disease and that the authorities requested that the slaves be quarantined.<sup>116</sup> This is further suggested by the fact that three slaves died between 7 and 23 January. When they were eventually brought ashore, there were one hundred and thirty two male slaves, sixty three female slaves, seventy eight boys and fifty seven girls.<sup>117</sup>

On 21 March 1760, Bodkin imported a cargo of five men, eight women, seventeen boys and one girl.<sup>118</sup> Eight days later, Bodkin imported a further thirty nine slaves from St. Kitts.<sup>119</sup> The following June, Captain Dishington imported yet another African cargo from the Guinea Coast for Bodkin (see figure 4a). Of the one hundred and one survivors, there were twenty two men, thirty six women, twenty nine boys and fourteen girls.<sup>120</sup> In all, Bodkin's shipments of slaves from beyond the West Indies totalled four hundred and seventy one in 1760. This figure does not include smaller shipments of slaves from neighbouring islands. As we will see in section five, many of these slaves were intended for the French sugar plantations of St. Domingue. In section five, I will examine the journey taken by some two hundred of Bodkin's slaves as they voyaged towards the French colony. Forming part of a cargo of contraband goods for the French market, these slaves were shipped with mixed dry goods on board Bodkin's vessel, the *Saint Croix*. First however, section four will examine some aspects of the illegal inter-island trade that was conducted between St. Croix and French Saint Domingue.

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<sup>115</sup> CJC, 7 January 1760, fo. 10, # 15 [incoming]

<sup>116</sup> High rates of mortality were often due to outbreaks of communicable diseases. Frequently, they were random in nature see, Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 154.

<sup>117</sup> CJC, 26 January 1760, fo. 38, # 48 [incoming]

<sup>118</sup> Curiously, this group of slaves appears to have been imported from Montreal, see CJC, 21 March 1760. fo. 137, # 169 [incoming], .

<sup>119</sup> CJC, 29 March 1760, fo. 143, # 184 [incoming]

<sup>120</sup> CJC, 3 June 1760, no folio, # 335 [incoming]

ingaan N<sup>o</sup>:  
335 Ditto Dato Klipper Jacob  
Dijchinghore Jnaaf J. H. v.  
v. d. Harque, ingeant  
van Custeren Guinea  
van Lawrence Bodkin  
x 11 Negeren - Mand. a 1 ad. ... 58w.  
x 36 Negeren in d. v. a 1 ad. ... 174 -  
x 29 Negeren ... a 1 ad. ... 58 -  
x 11 Negeren ... a 1 ad. ... 58 -  
ingaan N<sup>o</sup>:  
Leteris! 211067 11. ....

Figure 4a: Lawrence Bodkin importing slaves into Christiansted from the Guinea Coast, CJC, 3 June 1760, no folio, # 335.

#### 4. Inter-island trade and illicit commercial activities

This section will discuss the ways in which cargos of dry goods and slaves were surreptitiously shipped to the French West Indian colonies by residents of St. Croix. In doing so, they utilised a number of deceptions which I will examine. The greatest deception of all involved the legal loophole provided by the neutral Spanish Freeport of Monte Cristi.

Once a suitable cargo of provisions, linens, slaves and silver had been assembled, they were laded on board a Danish ship at St. Croix and taken to the French islands. The re-export of these commodities was never straightforward however, and as we will see, local merchants at St. Croix often took extreme measures to ensure that cargoes reached their French destination. Although settlers often ordered shipments of European goods for their own consumption, it was common for individuals to order more than they needed for their own personal use. This was the norm in the West Indies, and by doing so, items could be sold or exchanged on an informal level with family, friends or acquaintances. This helped to supplement incomes that would otherwise be dependent on a successful harvest.

To those residing at the West Indies, trade and barter was a way of life. This was as true for wholesalers such as ‘Skerret, Bodkin and Ferral’, as it was for local planters, artisans and business people. While local trade within the community sustained the island’s economy, many colonists looked beyond St. Croix for commercial opportunities. Given the location of the island, colonists frequently took advantage of the favourable trading conditions at neighbouring islands. As a result, local sailors found their niche in the inter-island trade and shipped goods on behalf of others for a fee. One such individual was Henry Ryan’s brother of Montserrat who operated a cargo and passenger vessel that sailed between the Leeward Islands and St. Croix.<sup>121</sup>

Because the Customs Records for Christiansted only represent those cargoes and vessels that declared themselves, it is highly probable that small vessels such as Ryan’s were in general use but did not always declare themselves. In spite of this however, the Customs Records for 1760 reveal a number of local sailors who operated on a small scale within the region. Whether shipping European goods from one side of the island to another, or transporting manufactures to another island entirely, these traders were an integral part of the local economy. Once goods arrived from Europe they were often warehoused in Christiansted until they could be shipped to a foreign destination. Of the commodities mentioned in the previous section, only plantation tools and hardware appear to have remained on the island. This indicates that these goods were in high

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<sup>121</sup> See LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Thomas Baker, London, 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 1753 fo. 66.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

demand at St. Croix. The other goods, linens and provisions, followed well-established routes, as did the large numbers of slaves who transited the island.

### *Tricks and deceptions in the contraband trade*

Due to the British naval presence which attempted to isolate Saint Domingue throughout the Seven Years' War, commercial transactions with the merchants at that island became increasingly difficult. As a result, a variety of methods were used to avoid British detection and to sustain the international sugar trade with the merchants at St. Domingue.<sup>122</sup> First and foremost was the reliance on neutral ports to circulate French plantation produce and to supply the French island with provisions and slaves. Dutch St. Eustatius, a renowned smuggling centre, was one of the primary ports in the region that was in a position to do this. By the late 1750s, Britain had also blockaded St. Eustatius, so intent were they on preventing any trade whatsoever with Saint Domingue.<sup>123</sup> Demand for goods, manufactures and labour remained high at the French island however, just as demand for French sugar remained high among West Indian merchants. Accordingly, the trade that was traditionally conducted via St. Eustatius shifted to encompass the neutral ports of St. Croix. This was due to the fact that the neutral Danes were not considered to be as great a threat to British interests as their Dutch neighbours.<sup>124</sup> They were a threat however, and as we will see, a thriving trade with French Saint Domingue soon developed at the Danish island.

In order to sail amongst the islands of the West Indies, local traders and coasters often had to prove the neutrality of their vessels, crews and cargoes. As a result, the practice of 'colouring' soon became a widely used method of evading the attentions of privateers. When departing from the harbour at Christiansted, a captain was issued with a set of papers that contained information regarding the destination of the ship, the origin of the crew and, most importantly the origin of the cargo. These papers also contained a ship's passport that requested that the neutrality of the vessel be recognised and respected. However, due to the possibility that all or part of the ship's cargo was of French origin and thus considered to be contraband by British privateers, false documents were regularly issued by the Governor Von Prock of St. Croix.<sup>125</sup>

Another way to secure multiple sets of papers for one's vessel was to purchase a vessel that had been recently seized by a privateer. The expense of a Prize Court trial

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<sup>122</sup> 'There were...abuses so ingenious and so mixed up with Custom House technicalities that to describe them would be to overload this topic with detail.', Pares, *War and trade in the West Indies*, p. 441.

<sup>123</sup> Dull, *The French Navy and the Seven Years' War*, p. 115.

<sup>124</sup> The Danes were not thought to have been capable of the 'commercial tricks' played by the Dutch, see Kent, *War and trade in northern seas*, p. 152.

<sup>125</sup> Pares, *Colonial Blockade and Neutral Rights*, p. 169.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

was often best avoided by captors who stood to lose money the longer a case took to be resolved. Ship's captains were also keen to avoid the delays and expense associated with the Prize Courts. So, if there was an opportunity to do so, French privateers were often amenable to negotiations with British captains or ship owners. If a privateer seized a vessel he could apply to have it condemned in its own jurisdiction. The captain could then apply for it to be released, along with its perishable cargo, on the understanding that all costs would be met by the captain or owner should the vessel be found guilty. The French privateer and British captain could then sell the vessel locally, split the proceeds and claim against the vessel's insurance. In one case, a British vessel was sold at Christiansted and thus became Danish. However, the British vessel retained all of its paperwork and continued to operate under its previous name.<sup>126</sup> In addition to having multiple sets of papers, Danish vessels that operated out of St. Croix frequently had a primary captain who was Danish and a secondary captain who was a British subject. This was to make the deception all the more plausible, for what good were a false set of British papers without an English speaking captain? As we will see, this was the case with a number of vessels seized by the prize courts.<sup>127</sup>

While all the above deceptions assisted neutral ships to carry French cargoes, and to sail with ease in West Indian waters and subsequently to Europe, they did not solve the problem of how to sail into the blockaded French ports and obtain French goods. One option was for a British ship to apply for a 'flag of truce' licence. This was a popular option among shipowners at the British Leeward Islands. During wartime, it was deemed necessary by the British authorities to secure the release of British subjects who had been captured by the French. It was agreed that such releases should be carried out by making a direct swap of French prisoners of war who had been seized by the British. In theory, a British vessel would sail into a French port under a white flag of truce, exchange its French captives for British captives, and promptly leave. In practice however, the transaction was slightly more protracted. Given the cost and trouble involved, the Royal Navy did not wish to partake in such minor exchanges. As a result, licences for 'flag of truce' vessels were easily obtainable at the British colonies. With such a licence, a captain could finance his patriotic services to the British Crown by conducting a few minor commercial transactions once he arrived at the French port. This soon got out of hand and became open to flagrant abuses. By the end of the war, the 'Flag of Truce' had become synonymous with illicit West Indian commerce. During the

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<sup>126</sup> This was the case with Irwin's *Adventure*, which was previously a British ship called the *Barrington*. See also, Pares, *Colonial Blockade*, pp. 60, 71.

<sup>127</sup> See the cases of the *Saint Croix* and *The Adventure*, below.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

war however, it provided a perfectly legitimate method for trading with the French colonies.<sup>128</sup>

Although successful in its own right, the Flag of Truce trade was limited by two factors. The first was the difficulty in obtaining French captives. While it was possible to secure the services of Britons who pretended to be French captives on the outward journey, and then feigned the status of prisoners of war on the return voyage, it was not always practical. Second, due to its success as a means for conducting illicit trade, Flag of Truce vessels were soon targeted by Rear Admiral Thomas Cotes. As the Royal Navy tightened its grip on the West Indies in 1759, it became increasingly risky to engage in direct trade, neutral or otherwise, with the beleaguered French market.<sup>129</sup>

As a result, the use of the 'collusive capture' became prevalent throughout the war. If a foreign vessel wished to enter a French port, a French privateer could be paid to perform a mock capture. In doing so, the foreign vessel could be escorted into a French port. Likewise, if a trading vessel wished to ensure its passage was uninterrupted by eager privateers, it could engage the services of another privateer. The latter could, for a fee, pretend to have already captured the trading vessel, thus acting as an escort through potentially treacherous waters. Like the flag of truce method, the collusive capture relied heavily on honour amongst thieves. Moreover, there was no guarantee that the escort privateer would have sufficient firepower and armaments to stave off an attack.<sup>130</sup>

### *Monte Cristi*

By the late 1750s, the Spanish authorities at Santo Domingo, the western half of Hispaniola, devised a simple solution to the difficulties encountered by those engaging in illicit commercial activities. Like Denmark and the Dutch Republic, Spain was neutral for the greater part of the Seven Years' War. As a result, a commercial entrepôt was established at the tiny settlement of Monte Cristi, which was located at the north-western border of Santo Domingo, just east of French Saint Domingue. (Figure 4b) Monte Cristi differed from other entrepôts in that there were no duties payable of any kind, nor were there any customs officials. In all, the settlement was utterly undeveloped and was devoid of a harbour or a quay. Although there were no taxes or duties per se, prospective traders were liable to arbitrary payments to local officials.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Truxes, *Defying Empire*, pp. 89-93.

<sup>129</sup> Truxes, *Defying Empire*, pp. 94, 100.

<sup>130</sup> Pares, *Colonial Blockade*, p. 23.

<sup>131</sup> Truxes has written extensively on Monte Cristi see, Truxes, 'Transnational trade in the wartime North Atlantic', pp. 751-80.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade



**Figure 4b:** Monte Cristi, c. 1760  
[Thomas M. Truxes, *Defying Empire* (New York, 2008), p. 80]

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

The genius of having an entrepôt in neutral Spanish territory was that technically, those who traded there were not in breach of the British navigation laws or the infamous 'Rule of '56'. This was particularly the case if all trade was conducted via Spanish intermediaries. In theory, if a merchant sold European goods to a Spanish trader at Monte Cristi, purchased local Spanish produce in return and ensured that he obtained all the necessary Spanish paperwork, there should be no difficulty with the British authorities. In practice however, the European goods that were sold to the Spanish traders were immediately shipped around the headland where they were traded at Cap François.

Subsequently, the Spanish traders would return with French sugar which was then loaded onto international vessels, and falsely declared by the local authorities to be Spanish. The fact that very little sugar was being produced at Santo Domingo seemed not to deter them, and local Spanish officials, together with their families, made a tidy profit from the exercise.<sup>132</sup>

Such evasions were simplified because some of the larger European merchants at St. Croix were accustomed to send French speaking supercargoes to Cap François. Although expensive, this proved to be cost effective in the long run. Those who neglected to engage a supercargo were forced to negotiate on their own behalf and this often led to expensive delays and misunderstandings. Supercargoes then, played an important part in the overall scheme of international trade at Cap François. Foreigners who entered The Cap with the intention of trading with local colonists would normally be in breach of the French *l'exclusif*. However, given the straitened situation at Saint Domingue, traders who wished to supply the island simply had to apply to the local French governor who, for a fee, would supply the necessary paperwork.<sup>133</sup>

As word spread about this clever enterprise, vessels flocked from North America, Europe and the surrounding islands to take advantage of the conditions. Indeed, the prevalence of North American traders at The Mount has been well-documented.<sup>134</sup> However, the presence of European traders has been given less attention. As discussed in the previous section, the European contraband trade via St. Croix was a thriving industry and during 1760, a number of shipments of European cargoes to St. Croix were recorded in the Christiansted Customs' ledger. Similarly in return, a good deal of French sugar was recorded as passing through the Danish port on its way to Europe.

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<sup>132</sup> Pitman, *The development of the British West Indies*, pp. 314-417.

<sup>133</sup> Also known as 'permissions', governors of Saint Domingue dispensed them liberally in times of war see, Charles Frostin, *Les révoltes blanches à Saint-Domingue aux XVII et XVIII siècles* (Rennes, 2008), p. 171.

<sup>134</sup> See for example, Truxes, *Transnational trade in the wartime North Atlantic*, pp. 751-80 and Richard Pares, *Yankees and Creoles: the trade between North America and the West Indies before the American Revolution* (London, 1956), pp. 63-4.



## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

Meanwhile, documents among the records of the High Court of the Admiralty reveal a prodigious amount of information concerning neutral Danish trade conducted through such illegal channels. Although both the Danish and the British sources offer different kinds of information, they complement each other. By analysing Danish port books of 1760, it is possible to trace the origins of items imported into Christiansted and their subsequent destinations when re-exported. Where it is not possible to trace the movements of these goods, papers relating to the Prize Courts can prove to be most illuminating. Accordingly, the following section examines merchants involved in the illicit trade to Monte Cristi. While their movements there are documented by British sources, the composition of their cargo, along with its origins, can be traced using Danish sources.

### 5. Illicit returns of French sugar to Europe

Although records relating to the Prize Courts should be used with caution, they offer a tremendous amount of detail regarding illicit trading patterns. On occasion, the recollections of a witness may have been influenced by a personal agenda.<sup>135</sup> Notwithstanding this, it is possible to glean fragments of pertinent information from these sources in relation to cargoes, destinations or the sequence of events which resulted in a ship's seizure by privateers. This is certainly the case with the following two examples that document the movements of the *Adventure* and the *Saint Croix* as they cleared from Christiansted in order to trade at Monte Cristi.

#### *Case studies: The Saint Croix and the Adventure*

In 1760, the Anglo-French war in the Caribbean region was at its height and French Saint Domingue continued to face shortages of food, equipment and labour. Although the colony's plantations continued to produce large volumes of sugar and coffee, British blockades prevented any direct communication between French vessels and European markets. As a result, Saint Domingue provided a market for low cost European supplies that consistently fetched high prices. In return, the French plantations provided large amounts of high quality produce at relatively cheap prices. Despite the fact that any contact with the French colonies was risky, the potential to make easy profits attracted a large number of international merchant vessels to the region. As we have seen, there were many deceptions required to access the French colonial market. From 1759-1760, the use of Monte Cristi as an adjacent neutral Freeport was one of the most popular.

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<sup>135</sup> This was evident in the case of *The Adventure*, when several members of the crew mutinied against Captain Tibbald and then later gave evidence against him. This aspect of the case will not be examined here but makes fascinating reading see, TNA, HCA 32/258, Ship: *The Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-61.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

As a result, the intended voyages of the *Saint Croix* and the *Adventure*, exemplify the complex trading patterns and commercial networks within which the Irish merchant-planters at St. Croix operated. In both cases, the vessels belonged to erstwhile British subjects who had migrated to St. Croix in order to take advantage of the economic opportunities available there. Although trading under the neutral flag of the Danish Crown, both missions were primarily motivated by self-interest as opposed to any altruistic desire to promote the sugar industry of the Danish Empire. As we have seen, Lawrence Bodkin, the principal owner of the *Saint Croix*, was a merchant by trade who had first come to St. Croix in the late 1740s. Although he owned several plantations, by 1760 his primary pursuit appears to have been the purchase and sale of slaves, both directly from Africa and from other islands in the region.

Dr. Andrew Irwin on the other hand, was a physician by profession who also owned a plantation in Prince's Quarter. He was not a merchant and his involvement in the Monte Cristi trade appears to have been less well orchestrated than that of Bodkin. Although the principal owner of the *Saint Croix* was Lawrence Bodkin, other merchant-planters such as Christopher McEvoy and Nicholas Dunbavin, took a small share in the venture. This would have allowed Bodkin to spread his investments so as to minimise risk should the venture come into difficulty.<sup>136</sup> In contrast, Andrew Irwin was the sole owner of the *Saint Croix* and as such, would have suffered heavy losses should his vessel fail. The intention of both owners was to ship a cargo to the neutral Freeport of Monte Cristi. Once there, the cargo was to be placed aboard neutral Spanish sloops and taken to Cap François where it was to be sold for the best price possible. In return for their cargoes from St. Croix, the vessels would receive a cargo of French plantation produce which they would then have certified as Spanish by a local Spanish official who would provide the necessary paperwork for a fee. The goods were then carried to Amsterdam or to Hamburg where they were sold at a profit. Proceeds from the sales of the French goods were then used to fund a slaving mission from Guinea to St. Croix, or they were used to fund the shipment of plantation tools and equipment from London to St. Croix.

As neutral vessels, both would have provided good cover for their lucrative French cargoes. In spite of this, together with the fact that both crews took every precaution to secure falsified documentation, the *Saint Croix* and the *Adventure* were seized on their return voyages to Europe. Furthermore, the ships and their cargoes were subsequently condemned by the Admiralty courts. As a result, records relating to the activities of the *Saint Croix* and the *Adventure* have survived. These documents, when considered in

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<sup>136</sup> Price, 'What did Merchants Do?', p. 279.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

conjunction with the Danish Customs Ledgers of 1760, give an insight into the world of the contraband trader during the Seven Years' War. Although risks were high, the potential profit of such an undertaking made such risks worthwhile.

### *The Saint Croix*

In March 1761, following a period of eight months at Monte Cristi, the *Saint Croix* made its way northwards as it began its voyage to Europe. Its return cargo was composed of a good deal of sugar and coffee that had been laded at Monte Cristi by Spanish traders there. When seized by the General Shirley just off the coast of the Bahamas, the *Saint Croix* was taken into the port of New Providence for its trial at the Vice-Admiralty court there. On being questioned, the crew of the *Saint Croix* gave several statements regarding a number of illicit transactions that they witnessed both at Monte Cristi and within French territory as it was not in their best interests to withhold such information. In spite of this, Captain Debroskey protested his innocence. Given that a lengthy trial would prove costly, and could have resulted in the loss of his wages, the captain was keen to present a version of events that would exonerate himself, his crew, the vessel's owners and, most importantly, the valuable cargo he was carrying to Hamburg.

As a result, Debroskey's statement differed in many ways to those given by members of his crew. By examining these inconsistencies, it is possible to build a picture of Lawrence Bodkin's role as supercargo as he transferred goods between Spanish and French jurisdictions, always careful to cover his tracks and to obtain any documentation that would allow him to prove the supposed Spanish origins of his Europe-bound cargo.

Accordingly, Debroskey's account of his sojourn at 'the Mount' is a simplified and sanitised version of what actually happened. The Captain recounted how he had cleared customs at St. Croix on 23 June 1760 and departed for Spanish Monte Cristi with a cargo of slaves, forty hogsheads of wine and beer, several chests of dry goods and two bales of Oznabrucks. Having reached the Freeport some five days later, he dropped anchor and waited as instructed for Lawrence Bodkin. According to Debroskey's account, Bodkin arrived soon after the *Saint Croix* and publicly sold his outbound cargo from St. Croix to local Spanish merchants. With the proceeds of these sales, he purchased a quantity of sugar and coffee from these merchants, laded them on board the *Saint Croix*, obtained the requisite documentation and consigned the goods to his correspondent, Richard Thornton in Hamburg. Debroskey's paperwork supported this version of events. From a legal perspective, there was no documentary evidence to suggest that the *Saint Croix* was carrying contraband. However, each of the accounts

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

given by the remainder of the crew suggested otherwise. By piecing the details of their statements together, another version of events emerges.

### *Outbound Cargo of the Saint Croix*

The cargo that was shipped aboard the *Saint Croix* for Monte Cristi had been imported by Lawrence Bodkin and his associates over the previous six months. In their statements, the crew members described this cargo as consisting of chests of dry goods, such as sail duck, checked cotton and oznabrucks. In addition, there were forty casks of wine and beer, some gunpowder and around two hundred slaves. If we consult the Christiansted Custom's books for the period leading up to June 1760, it is possible to trace the origins of some of these goods and slaves. For instance, in March Christopher McEvoy imported a large quantity of fabrics from London including oznabrucks, linens and assorted cottons.<sup>137</sup> In the same shipment, Bodkin imported, among other commodities, one hogshead of wine, one hundred and ninety eight dozen bottles of cider and three hundred and eight dozen bottles of beer.<sup>138</sup> In this way it is likely that the two hundred slaves re-exported by Lawrence Bodkin to Monte Cristi were among the four hundred and seventy one slaves he had imported to St. Croix over the previous six months.<sup>139</sup>

It is clear that Bodkin had been fully briefed about the fluctuating French market. The goods imported into St. Croix by Bodkin and his associates were ordered from London because there was a market for them. By the summer of 1760 however, it was becoming increasingly clear that the candles, salted beef and butter that had once sold at high prices at St. Domingue, were selling at a loss. This was due to the fact that Monte Cristi Bay had been inundated with such provisions as international merchants scrambled to take advantage of the high demand. In spite of the fact that the previous April, Bodkin had imported a large quantity of provisions for re-export, in June he opted not to ship this to Monte Cristi.<sup>140</sup> As a result, the cargo on board the *Saint Croix* was composed of goods that Bodkin believed would best suit the prevailing market conditions. While there was no demand for provisions, in June 1760 the market for slaves, alcohol and cloth was brisk.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> CJC, 2 March 1760, fo. 89, # 132 [incoming]

<sup>138</sup> CJC, 2 March 1760, fo. 89, # 132 [incoming]

<sup>139</sup> See p. 132

<sup>140</sup> Bodkin, Skerrett and Farrell imported beef, butter, tallow, candles and tongue to the value of over four hundred pounds sterling see, CJC, 3 April 1760, fo. 149, # 197 [incoming].

<sup>141</sup> Truxes, 'Transnational trade in the wartime North Atlantic', pp. 772-3.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

### *Outfitting the vessel*

The crew of the *Saint Croix* was composed of the mandatory complement of two thirds naturalised Danish sailors. Although John McFarland and Charles Ross were both natives of Glasgow, Christian Ramsee, was a native of the Danish seaport of Kiøge. Meanwhile, John Martin Jones and John Martin Gantz, were both natives of Saxony. Hans Nissen was a native of Denmark, while John Jacob Sewalt and Captain John Debroskey were natives of Danzig.<sup>142</sup> Due to the illicit nature of its intended voyage, the *Saint Croix* also had a second captain. Mark Canavan, was an Irish skipper who was on standby to take the helm should the need to disguise the vessel's origins arise. Canavan, 'was by Denomination of a Pilot, but had equal Command with the Danish Captain...'<sup>143</sup>

Despite Canavan's presence on board, Captain Debroskey was ultimately in charge of the operation. As a result, the owners of the vessel gave him strict written instructions relating to how he should conduct both the West Indian and the European legs of the voyage. On reaching Hamburg, he was to arrange for the vessel to be refitted for a slaving mission and was advised to be 'prudent and careful' in his purchasing of the necessary equipment and provisions. Improvements to the ship were to be conducted frugally, and galleries, which were a feature of slaving vessels of this era, were to be refitted as required. In all, the owners assured Debroskey that if successful, he would be well remunerated.<sup>144</sup>

In order to secure freedom of passage, the skipper was obliged to ensure that his paperwork was in order. Before leaving for Europe, the ship needed a Danish passport which was eventually issued by Governor Von Prock on 18 July 1760.<sup>145</sup> In addition, he required certificates of clearance from Christiansted. This paperwork was intended to serve as an assurance that the crew, cargo and destination of the vessel was in keeping with Danish legislation regarding commercial traffic and requested that 'any lawful Trade will be granted unto him.' This facility was open to such abuse, that it does not appear to have provided any protection from privateers.<sup>146</sup>

### *Monte Cristi*

The *Saint Croix* set sail with its cargo of goods and slaves on 23 June 1760. Following an uneventful passage lasting five days, the vessel weighed anchor in Monte

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<sup>142</sup> The Appellant's Case', TNA, HCA 45/3, Lords Commissioners of Appeals [ship *St. Croix*], pp. 9-18.

<sup>143</sup> Deposition of John Jacob Sewals, Boatswain, Appendix to the Appellant's Case, TNA, HCA 45/3, Lords Commissioners of Appeals [ship *St. Croix*], p. 7.

<sup>144</sup> 'Owners' orders to Captain Debroskey' in The Appellant's Case', TNA, HCA 45/3, Lords Commissioners of Appeals [ship *St. Croix*], p. 8.

<sup>145</sup> The Appellant's Case', TNA, HCA 45/3, Lords Commissioners of Appeals [ship *St. Croix*], p. 7.

<sup>146</sup> Olsen and Møller, *Toldvæsenet i Dansk Vestindien*, p. 53.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

Cristi Bay on 28 June.<sup>147</sup> There, the crew was likely to have witnessed the Freeport at the height of its short-lived importance. Vessels from North America, Europe and the West Indies traded with one another and with Spanish merchants on the water, rarely coming to shore to conduct their transactions. This was due to the absence of facilities associated with a contemporary sea port and further emphasises the fact that its status as a neutral, and legal, venue for trans-imperial trade was as ad hoc as it was transitory.<sup>148</sup>

Although Bodkin was directly involved in the sale of the cargo, he did not sail to Monte Cristi aboard the *Saint Croix*. This was because he had important business to attend to at Cap Francois. In order that he be allowed to trade as a supercargo at the French colony, he was required to have a current 'licence to trade' awarded by the officials at that port.<sup>149</sup> According to the ship's log of a vessel anchored in the vicinity of the *Saint Croix*, Bodkin returned to sell his cargo at Monte Cristi 'in a schooner Flag a Truce' that belonged to him. This suggests that Bodkin entered the port of Cap Francois and returned to Monte Cristi under the pretence that he was exchanging prisoners of war in a licensed British vessel and was thus, protected from the attentions of British privateers.

Once Bodkin arrived at the *Saint Croix*, he set to selling his cargo immediately. Bodkin's Flag of Truce schooner had brought an additional quantity of fabric which was stowed aboard the *Saint Croix* for safekeeping. Within a short time, Bodkin had sold ten of his slaves and a small amount of his dry goods to Spanish merchants from whom he hired a number of sloops and canoes. These small craft were charged with ferrying the remainder of the cargo the short distance into French waters and on to Cap Francois. Under normal conditions this journey would have been a straightforward one. Given that both the Royal Navy and British privateers were becoming increasingly interested in Monte Cristi Bay, the neutral Spanish craft were tasked with carrying their Danish cargoes along the coastal shallows where enemy vessels could not obstruct their passage.<sup>150</sup> In order to ensure the best price for his goods, Bodkin accompanied the cargo on its coastal journey to Cap Francois.<sup>151</sup>

Once there, a crewmember of the *Saint Croix* claimed that Bodkin had engaged the services of a French merchant to assist in the transactions that followed.<sup>152</sup> The slaves and other sundry items were soon sold at the French port and Bodkin tasked his French

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<sup>147</sup> The Appellant's Case, TNA, HCA 45/3, Lords Commissioners of Appeals [ship *St. Croix*], p. 1.

<sup>148</sup> Truxes, 'Transnational trade in the wartime North Atlantic', pp. 770-1.

<sup>149</sup> Affidavit of Charles Ross, Appendix to the Appellant's Case, TNA, HCA 45/3, Lords Commissioners of Appeals [ship *St. Croix*], p. 6.

<sup>150</sup> Truxes, 'Transnational trade in the wartime North Atlantic', p. 771

<sup>151</sup> Affidavit of Henry Frost, Cooper. Appendix to the Appellant's Case, TNA, HCA 45/3, Lords Commissioners of Appeals [ship *St. Croix*], p. 5.

<sup>152</sup> Affidavit of Charles Ross, Appendix to the Appellant's Case, TNA, HCA 45/3, Lords Commissioners of Appeals [ship *St. Croix*], p. 6.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

associate with composing a cargo of sugar and coffee for Debroskey's European voyage. Having secured the terms of this arrangement, Bodkin made his way back to Monte Cristi with the assistance of nine members of the *Saint Croix* who had sailed the compact ship's boat into French territory in order to collect him.<sup>153</sup>

While the crew of the *Saint Croix* waited for the return cargo of French goods to arrive at Monte Cristi, Bodkin took advantage of the opportunities provided by the floating marketplace at Monte Cristi Bay. On one occasion, he bought five hundred barrels of flour which had been brought to the Bay on board the New York vessel, the *Quebeck*. This was warehoused on board the *Saint Croix* and, when the time was right, sent to the French ports by Bodkin in order to take advantage of a peak in prices caused by flour shortages there.<sup>154</sup>

In return for his cargo of slaves, fabrics and alcohol, Bodkin obtained four hundred and forty six tierces of white French sugar, thirteen tierces of brown French sugar along with ten barrels of coffee beans.<sup>155</sup> This was laded on board the *Saint Croix* and the crew waited in earnest until it was safe to depart for Hamburg. In the meantime, Bodkin set about securing the relevant paperwork from the Spanish authorities at Monte Cristi. Although he had personally purchased the sugar and coffee at Cap Francois, Bodkin required receipts from the Spanish traders who had shipped it to Monte Cristi for him. This was in order to show that he had adhered to the principles of commercial law that prevailed in region, should the *Saint Croix* be misfortunate enough to be seized by British privateers. Both Paulus Martinus and Juan Moreno Feneranda obliged and issued this paperwork in October 1760.

There was a delay of several months between obtaining the cargo of French goods and the departure of the *Saint Croix* for Hamburg. From late October to early March, the crew waited for a suitable opportunity to set sail. This delay was due to a number of factors. The first was that the waters surrounding Monte Cristi Bay had become inundated with privateers and Men of War. Secondly, Bodkin insisted that the *Saint Croix* wait at the Spanish Freeport until an insurance policy to the value of eighteen thousand pounds sterling was confirmed.<sup>156</sup> It is unclear whether this value was inclusive

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<sup>153</sup> Affidavit of John McFarland, Appendix to the Appellant's Case, TNA, HCA 45/3, Lords Commissioners of Appeals [ship *St. Croix*], p. 11.

<sup>154</sup> See Affidavit of Charles Ross, Appendix to the Appellant's Case, TNA, HCA 45/3, Lords Commissioners of Appeals [ship *St. Croix*], p. 6 and Truxes, p. 774.

<sup>155</sup> Letters to John Thornton, Appendix to the Appellant's Case, TNA, HCA 45/3, Lords Commissioners of Appeals [ship *St. Croix*], p. 8.

<sup>156</sup> In response to the war, insurance rates for ships sailing to Europe from the West Indies rose steeply and in the winter of 1759 -1760, they peaked at 15-20%. While the main insurers in London were Lloyds or the London and Royal Exchange Assurance Company, smaller companies and recently retired merchants were often prepared to underwrite part of the risk. From Bodkin's perspective, it may have proved more cost effective and risk adverse to secure a primary policy in London and a secondary one in New York see, Price, 'Buchanan and Simpson', pp. 33-4.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

of the ship and cargo, or if it insured the loss of the cargo alone. Nonetheless, it was said that a policy for six thousand pounds was obtained in New York and that a supplementary policy of twelve thousand pounds was secured in London.<sup>157</sup> Once news of the insurance had reached Bodkin, he obtained a certificate of clearance from the Spanish governor of Monte Cristi, Francisco de Cabresas on 20 February. This was to be used as proof to certify that all goods carried by the *Saint Croix* were purchased ‘from the inhabitants and Merchants of this City...and not from any other stranger, directly or indirectly.’ Of course, this was not the case.

Such an impeccable set of paperwork was likely to have eased the concerns of Bodkin and Debroskey who both stood to lose heavily should the *Saint Croix* be seized and detained by privateers. Because wages were only paid on the safe arrival at the intended destination, crews were wary of voyages which involved the shipping of contraband. If brought up by a privateer, the crew would be forced to wait, often for several months, until the ship was released. In the event that it was condemned, the crew would face severe difficulties in recouping their wages.<sup>158</sup> Once his crew became aware of the illicit commercial activities that were being undertaken by Bodkin, together with the increased number of privateers in the area, several deserted. In his deposition, McFarland claimed to have heard Bodkin remark at Monte Cristi that, ‘it was better for them to stay still at the Mount (until the coast should be clear of Privateers) rather than be taken and carried to Jamaica...’ If that were to happen, he continued, ‘they would lose their wages and he his Ship and Cargo.’<sup>159</sup>

Before bidding farewell to the crew, Bodkin finalised the crew’s wages and confirmed with Thornton in Hamburg that the sums payable were originally calculated in ‘St. Croix currency’ which was ‘17 per cent worse than Copenhagen currency’. With this in mind, Thornton would have to calculate the crew’s wages in Hamburg currency ‘as the Exchange governs’.<sup>160</sup> It made good business sense to ensure the good health of the slaves purchased on the Guinea Coast. A high rate of survival increased the value of the cargo.<sup>161</sup> As a result, a ship’s surgeon could fetch a high wage. The wages of Mr. John Gray, who was the ship’s surgeon, reflect that. Before departing, Bodkin gave Gray a bill of exchange on Thornton worth over one hundred and thirty pounds sterling. In

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<sup>157</sup> Affidavit of Charles Ross, Appendix to the Appellant's Case, TNA, HCA 45/3, Lords Commissioners of Appeals [ship *St. Croix*], p. 6.

<sup>158</sup> Pares, *Colonial Blockade and Neutral Rights*, p. 206.

<sup>159</sup> Deposition of John McFarland, Appendix to the Appellant's Case, TNA, HCA 45/3, Lords Commissioners of Appeals [ship *St. Croix*], p. 16.

<sup>160</sup> Letter to Richard Thornton, Appendix to the Appellant's Case, TNA, HCA 45/3, Lords Commissioners of Appeals [ship *St. Croix*], p. 9.

<sup>161</sup> Richard B. Sheridan, *Doctors and Slaves, 1680-1834* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 109.



## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

addition, Gray was to receive half of the proceeds resulting from the sale of the coffee.<sup>162</sup>

The remaining proceeds of the coffee sales were to be divided between the owners of the vessel. Given that varying quantities of the sugar was assigned to the owners in order to reflect their overall share in the venture, the proceeds of the sale of that commodity was to be remitted via bill of exchange to individual agents in London. While Nicholas Dunbavin's sugar sales were to be sent to John Kirwan, the shares pertaining to Christopher McEvoy and Lawrence Bodkin were to be remitted to Nicholas Tuite in London.

Despite taking the necessary precautions, the *Saint Croix* was seized two days after its departure for Hamburg. On 10 March 1761, the *General Shirley* captured the vessel and detained it at the port of New Providence in the Bahamas. Although all paperwork was in order, the crew was subjected to a trial and the vessel was subsequently condemned by a Vice-Admiralty court at New Providence. Had Bodkin accepted this judgement, there would have been no records of the case. The fact that he pressed for an appeal before the Lords Commissioners for hearing Appeals in Prize Causes, has meant that the depositions and seized documents relating to the case were published.

### *The case of the Adventure*

Another neutral Danish vessel that was engaged in the shipment of French contraband to Europe was the *Adventure*. To trade by 'adventure' was to trade without the latest market information.<sup>163</sup> Given the haste with which the *Adventure* was outfitted by Andrew Irwin, together with the subsequent failure of his cargo to meet the demands of the French market, it appears that his interest in the voyage was primarily speculative.

Like the *Saint Croix*, this ship and its cargo was seized by British privateers as it made its way to Amsterdam in the early months of 1761. As a result the ship's log, the contents of the Captain's mailbag, together with the original depositions of the crew have been preserved in the National Archives at Kew.<sup>164</sup> Given that the owners of the *Adventure* appealed their case to the High Court of the Admiralty, printed depositions are also extant.<sup>165</sup> The information contained in these sources, together with that provided by the Christiansted Custom's Records for 1760, provides us with another example of how the Irish merchant-planter community at St. Croix supplemented their incomes through illicit trade with the French colonies.

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<sup>162</sup> Letter to Richard Thornton, Appendix to the Appellant's Case, TNA, HCA 45/3, Lords Commissioners of Appeals [ship *St. Croix*], p. 8.

<sup>163</sup> Steele, *The English Atlantic, 1675-1740*, p. 217.

<sup>164</sup> Papers relating to the *Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-61, TNA, HCA 32/258

<sup>165</sup> The Respondent's Case, Lords Commissioners of Appeals [ship *Adventure*], TNA, HCA 45/3, p. 1.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

The vessel that became the *Adventure* was originally British. It had been constructed in Virginia and was subsequently rebuilt in Halifax, Nova Scotia where it was named the *Barrington*.<sup>166</sup> In the early months of 1760, the *Barrington* was involved in the trade between New York and St. Eustatius when it was seized by a French privateer. Hoping to avoid lengthy Court proceedings, the French privateer opted to bring the *Barrington* in to the port of Christiansted where it was auctioned to the highest bidder.<sup>167</sup> As a result, the *Barrington* was quickly sold to Dr. Andrew Irwin and the privateer was free to return to the high seas as quickly as possible.<sup>168</sup>

Irwin turned the vessel around quickly and the *Barrington*'s British colours were replaced by the *Adventure*'s neutral Danish colours. Like Bodkin, Irwin's intention was to ship a cargo of dry goods from St. Croix to Monte Cristi. There, his crew would load the cargo aboard neutral Spanish sloops and take it to Cap François where his agent would sell the goods. In return, this agent would ship a quantity of sugar and coffee back to Monte Cristi where it would be loaded aboard the *Adventure*. Once the requisite Spanish paperwork was secured by the crew of the *Adventure*, they would proceed for Europe. Because Irwin was the recipient of Dutch credit, his French goods would be consigned to a correspondent in Amsterdam who would then outfit the *Adventure* for a slaving mission to the Coast of Guinea on behalf of Irwin.

### *Outbound cargo of the Adventure*

In March 1760, the Custom's records for Christiansted show that Irwin imported the components necessary to construct a sugar mill and a distillation plant. This would suggest that he was expanding his production of sugar and had ordered the necessary equipment from London. He also imported a quantity of hollands and linen in this shipment and it is likely that this was intended for sale at Monte Cristi.<sup>169</sup> Unlike Bodkin, Irwin was not a merchant by trade. As a result, his preparations for the venture appear haphazard in comparison to those of Bodkin. In spite of this, he assembled a cargo for the French market that included one trunk filled with assorted fabrics, one puncheon filled with checked cotton, one chest and six bales of linen. In addition he

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<sup>166</sup> 'Deposition of John Stafford', Bundle: 'Claims, allegations, sale', TNA, HCA 32/258, Ship: The *Adventure*, Master: Tibbald.

<sup>167</sup> The Respondent's Case, Lords Commissioners of Appeals [ship *Adventure*], TNA, HCA 45/3, p.1.

<sup>168</sup> French privateers were notorious for this practice which appears to have been particularly prevalent at the Danish West Indies see, Pares, 'Colonial blockade', pp. 60, 42.

<sup>169</sup> Irwin's shipment consisted of 6 sugar mill rollers, 2 killdevil pans, 6 sugar mill axels, 6 sugar mill cases and 2 swan necks (coiled tubes used in the distillation process). This equipment was valued at £484. 6. ½ sterling see, CJC, 2 March 1760, fo. 89, # 132 [incoming].

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

included two hundred and thirty three iron pots, ten iron furnaces and thirty nine hogsheads of molasses.<sup>170</sup>

Hastily outfitted in March 1760, Andrew Irwin's instructions to Captain Tibbald were clear. Tibbald was to proceed to Monte Cristi and to sell his cargoes in return for French sugars. On leaving Monte Cristi, Tibbald was to proceed in the *Adventure* to Amsterdam where his cargo was consigned to Irwin's correspondent, Madame Sara Graves and sons. There, Tibbald was ordered to fit out the ship for a slaving voyage to Guinea and to be 'as frugal as possible'. Irwin wrote that he had ordered a cargo to the value of twelve hundred and fifty pounds sterling and that this was to be taken to the coast of Guinea so as to purchase 'only young slaves, chiefly boys or men boys...' If the outgoing cargo was insufficient to buy enough slaves to fill the ship's hold, Tibbald was instructed to 'take as many negroes upon freight as you can well carry and proceed for this port and deliver your cargo to my order.'<sup>171</sup>

When it came to wages, Irwin had agreed to pay each crew member according to their rank and 'quality'. Captain Tibbald was to receive five pounds sterling per month for the duration of the voyage, and was given an advance of thirty pieces of eight. John Stafford, mate, would earn twenty four pieces of eight per month. Irwin also gave him an advance of twenty pieces of eight. The boatswain was hired for twenty two pieces of eight per month and received an advance of twenty four. Meanwhile the remainder of the crew were contracted for twenty pieces of eight per month. All members signed a document which recorded their wages and advances. Of the nine mariners listed, three could not sign their names and marked an X.<sup>172</sup>

Beyond this, Irwin agreed to allow Tibbald four pounds out of every one hundred and four pounds that the slaves would be sold for once they reached the West Indies. In addition, he was to have his choice of two slaves 'as privilege out of the cargo' for his own use.<sup>173</sup> However, these slaves were to be chosen 'on the coast', before the schooner sailed for St. Croix. If there was a high rate of mortality among the slaves during the middle passage, this would prevent Tibbald from claiming survivors which would minimise potential sales.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> 'Bill of Lading for the *Adventure*', Christiansted, 3 April 1760, TNA, HCA 32/258, Ship: *Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-1761.

<sup>171</sup> Letter from Andrew Irwin to Captain James Tibbald, St. Croix, 3 April 1760, Ship's papers, Bundle: 'Claims, Allegations, Sale', TNA, HCA 32/258, Ship: *The Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-61.

<sup>172</sup> Muster roll of *The Adventure*, TNA, HCA 32/258, Ship: *The Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-61.

<sup>173</sup> In light of this arrangement, a song written by Tibbald in his log book is unsettling. The Captain's ditty relates to an acquaintance who coveted Tibbald's 'Little Brown Thing', 'I dream'd of no mischief but let him enjoy/ His innocent fancy and play with my Toy.../ The rest of my story, oh, how shall I sing/ In words, how he Ravish'd my little brown thing,' See Ship's Log, no date, TNA, HCA 32/258, Ship: *The Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-61.

<sup>174</sup> Agreement between Captain Tibbald and Andrew Irwin, signed in the presence of William Chippendale, St. Croix, 3 April 1760, TNA, HCA 32/258, Ship: *The Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-61.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

With regards to Danish paperwork, Irwin arranged that Tibbald would immediately become a burgher of the town of Christiansted. This meant that, on paper, the Captain was Danish and as such, could carry a Danish passport which would allow him to fly neutral colours.<sup>175</sup> Finally, Irwin instructed Tibbald that should he be captured by privateers, to ‘apply to Nicholas Tuite in London and forward to him your protest.’<sup>176</sup>

### *Monte Cristi*

The *Adventure*'s voyage to Monte Cristi was uneventful and is recorded in detail in Tibbald's log which he entitled, ‘Journey of a voyage by God's permission in the good schooner *Adventure* from St. Croix to Mounta Cristia and Amsterdam from thence to Africa and back to St. Croix.’ Leaving Christiansted harbour on Wednesday 9 April 1760, the schooner arrived in Monte Cristi on Saturday 12 April, where Tibbald ‘found riding hear about 90 sale [sail] of vessels.’<sup>177</sup> Tibbald was keen to transfer his cargo to local Spanish sloops who would take it to Irwin's agent in Cap François. However, no news was received from the French port and for several days the crew busied themselves by collecting wood and water, cleaning the hold, caulking and making rope. During this time, Tibbald's journal provides an excellent account of the large number of vessels trading while at anchor in the bay. Within the first few days, he had recorded ships, brigs, sloops and schooners sailing to and from St. Eustatius, St. Kitts, Providence, New York, Bermuda, London, Antigua, Jamaica and Hamburg.<sup>178</sup> Eventually, Captain Tibbald received word from Irwin's contacts at Cap François. He was to send his cargo thither and to await further instructions.

In order to ship the goods to the French port, Don Francisco de Cabresas, the Governor of Monte Cristi, strongly encouraged Tibbald to engage the services of his son, to whom he paid one hundred pieces of eight.<sup>179</sup> The goods were then placed into the Spanish craft and Tibbald prepared to wait for further instructions. Unlike captain Debroskey of the *Saint Croix*, Tibbald did not have the luxury of a supercargo to ensure that all went according to plan at Cap François. As a result, having heard nothing for several weeks, he grew increasingly impatient. Finally, he decided to take matters into

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<sup>175</sup> TNA, HCA 45/3, ‘The Respondent's Case’, Lords Commissioners of Appeals [ship *The Adventure*], p. 1.

<sup>176</sup> Andrew Irwin to Captain Tibbald, St. Croix, 3 April 1760, TNA, HCA 32/258, Ship: *Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-1.

<sup>177</sup> Ship's Log, *The Adventure*, TNA, HCA 32/258, Ship: *The Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-61.

<sup>178</sup> Ship's Log, TNA, HCA 32/258, Ship: *The Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-61.

<sup>179</sup> Deposition of John Stafford, TNA, HCA 32/258, ‘Claims, Allegations, Sale’, Ship: *The Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-61.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

his own hands. Launching the ship's boat, Captain Tibbald and three members of his crew set out for Cap François in order to investigate the delay.<sup>180</sup>

On reaching the Cap, Tibbald found that Irwin's French representative, Monsieur Larapier, was having difficulties in selling the cargo. With this, Tibbald agreed to return to the Mount in order to await instructions. Unfortunately for Tibbald, on his way back, he was seized by a French warship, the crew of which claimed that he was trading in French territory without a permit to do so. Unlike Bodkin, Tibbald had not secured a 'licence to trade' before he ventured into French waters. As a result, Tibbald and his crew were jailed for several days in a prison at Cap François and Monsieur Larapier was forced to make a considerable payment for their release. This situation would suggest that Irwin had not established what goods were in demand at the Cap before sending his cargo. Moreover, this incident may have been avoided if Irwin had employed a supercargo from the beginning of his venture. Overall, this incident highlights the degree to which the French merchants controlled their own market. Records suggest that Larapier's payment exceeded the value of Irwin's initial cargo and Larapier requested that Irwin 'immediately send a good cargo...otherwise it is impossible being that we are at present in advance for him.'<sup>181</sup> As a result, Tibbald was forced to communicate his predicament to Irwin and to request that he send another cargo to the Mount.

In order avoid further delays, Irwin sent an Irish supercargo, Robert Purviance who would 'see to expedite and get all your papers regular etc. etc'. To ensure everything ran smoothly, Irwin instructed, 'I desire you'll doe what every he directs and be ready with your boat & people to doe as shall appear best...' As soon as his cargo of French sugars was laded, Tibbald was to set out for Amsterdam as per previous directions.<sup>182</sup> The vessel on which Purviance first arrived at the Mount was the *Penelope*, a 'flag of truce' vessel belonging to Irwin and skippered by Captain Cox of Antigua. Given that Irwin's first cargo was unsuitable for the French market, Cox brought a second cargo consisting of bales of fabrics and 'sixty or seventy negros' from St. Croix to make up the shortfall.<sup>183</sup>

Clearly aware of the market conditions at the French ports, Captain Cox bought a quantity of flour, beef and wine from 'two ships belonging to Ireland', both of which were at anchor at Monte Cristi. Following this, a French merchant was enlisted at Monte

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<sup>180</sup> Deposition of Richard Limbladh, TNA, HCA, 32/258, 'Claims, Allegations, Sale' Ship: *Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-61

<sup>181</sup> Letter from Cairou et Laustier to James Tibbald, Cap Francois, 3 June 1760, TNA, HCA 32/258, Ship: *The Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-61.

<sup>182</sup> Andrew Irwin to James Tibbald, St. Croix, 20 June 1760, TNA, HCA 32/258, Ship: *The Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-61.

<sup>183</sup> Depositions of John Stafford, 10 January and 11 February 1761, TNA, HCA 32/258, Ship: *The Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-61.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

Cristi in order to help Purviance sell the cargo. This time, they planned to avoid the market at Cap François. Taking a parcel of bale goods, the French merchant, along with Purviance, masqueraded as French prisoners as they sailed for Fort Dauphin with Captain Cox in the *Flag of Truce*.<sup>184</sup> In total, Captain Cox's *Penelope* made two such trips to the French port where Purviance sold the cargo of slaves, fabrics, wine, flour and beef. He returned in the *Penelope* with over sixty thousand weight of French coffee for Tibbald's Europe bound voyage.<sup>185</sup>

Purviance, a man with a young family in Ireland, appears to have enjoyed his time at Monte Cristi and St. Croix. Letters from him to his wife, and to a friend, both of whom lived near Strabane in Co. Antrim, reveal the conditions of his employment at the West Indies. Initially at St. Croix, Purviance 'agreed to do the business of the vessels' for twenty pounds a month. Purviance reached a new agreement before he sailed to Monte Cristi with Captain Cox. The terms under which he operated in the French territories were more favourable and involved his being paid five per cent on all sales and the same on all purchases.<sup>186</sup> This, he believed would continue 'barring accidents' and as long as the war continued.<sup>187</sup> For Purviance, the purpose of his trading at the West Indies was to provide for his wife and children in Ireland. Accordingly, he regularly remitted money to them in the form of bills of exchange on London. Robert Purviance's wife Frances lived at 'Clounarell, near Strabane, Ireland' and he regularly thanked God that he had 'her and my babes to work for.'<sup>188</sup>

Having been away from home for almost a year, he wrote in the hope that his numerous letters had reached her. Previous to this, he had written on 28 July from Monte Cristi and sent it with Captain Charles Armstrong, who was bound for Hamburg. If the winds were in the Captain's favour, Armstrong had promised to call at Rathmullen, so as to deliver the letter to Fanny. Purviance wrote that since he had left Ireland, he had witnessed many things and that he 'should not for a thousand pounds want what knowledge I have already acquired of the world since my leaving you.'

This letter never reached Strabane, nor did the coffee that Purviance had consigned to his friend Robert Nielson. The *Adventure* set sail on Saturday 8 August under the protection of the *Little Bob* privateer, which had been hired for fifty pieces of eight to

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<sup>184</sup> Deposition of John Stafford, 11 February 1761, TNA, HCA 32/258, Ship: *The Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-61.

<sup>185</sup> Deposition of John Stafford, 10 January, TNA, HCA 32/258, Ship: *The Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-61.

<sup>186</sup> This higher rate was in line with that charged by commission agents involved in the slave trade see, Price, 'What did Merchants Do?', p. 279.

<sup>187</sup> Robert Purviance to Robert Nielson, Monte Cristi, 4 August 1760, TNA, HCA 32/258, Ship: *The Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-61.

<sup>188</sup> Robert Purviance to Robert Nielson, Monte Cristi, 4 August 1760, TNA, HCA 32/258, Ship: *The Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-61.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

'convoy him through the keys for fear of the Providence Privateers.'<sup>189</sup> This was successful, but the *Adventure* was subsequently seized by a British privateer several weeks later in the Irish Sea. Had these cargoes reached their destinations they would have provided the local economy at St. Croix with further supplies of slaves, plantation hardware and further saleable goods. Although Irwin did not make Nicholas Tuite his agent for this shipment, Tuite was mentioned as a correspondent who could be approached should his vessel get into difficulty.<sup>190</sup> Meanwhile, the profits from Bodkin's cargo were ultimately destined for Nicholas Tuite and John Kirwan by way of a bill of exchange on London.<sup>191</sup>

### 6. Conclusion

It has been suggested that the documentation that both vessels carried on their return voyages to Europe, would have been sufficient to prove their innocence in 1760. By 1761 however, the year both ships were seized, the Admiralty displayed a new determination to enforce the 'Doctrine of Continuous Voyage'<sup>192</sup> and both vessels were condemned. As a result, the legal loophole provided by the neutral Spanish Freeport of Monte Cristi, ceased to provide an effective means to trade with the merchants of French St. Domingue.

The *Saint Croix* and the *Adventure* are cases which show the patterns of illicit trade that sustained many planters at the island of St. Croix. Low-cost goods that were shipped from London on board vessels, whose journeys originated in Hamburg or Amsterdam, were re-exported to Saint Domingue via Monte Cristi. There, they were exchanged for valuable French plantation produce which was returned to either Hamburg or Amsterdam to be sold at a profit. This profit was then remitted to Nicholas Tuite in London and went towards the outfitting of slave ships for Africa, or towards the assembly of further cargoes of dry goods and essential plantation hardware for St. Croix. The above trading patterns allowed the value of commodities to be maximised across a number of jurisdictions. Moving from surpluses to scarcities, the trade was lucrative and proved essential for the development of sugar plantations at St. Croix.

As we have seen in this chapter, evidence relating to the neutral Danish carrying trade can be found in a range of locations. This is due to the fact that those involved in it operated within and between several imperial jurisdictions. Although the illicit trade in

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<sup>189</sup> Deposition of John Stafford, 10 January 1761, TNA, HCA 32/258, Ship: *The Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-61.

<sup>190</sup> Instructions from Andrew Irwin to Captain Tibbald, 3 April 1760, TNA, HCA 32/258, Ship: *The Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-61.

<sup>191</sup> The Appellant's Case, TNA, HCA 45/3, Lords Commissioners of Appeals [ship *St. Croix*], p. 2.

<sup>192</sup> See Chapter Three, p. 94.

## The Irish West Indian sugar trade

sugar was a lucrative one, it could not have been sustained without the neutral camouflage of the legitimate trade. Similarly, the legitimate trade depended on the continued expansion of sugar production at St. Croix. This could not have been possible without access to the international sugar markets of Europe. Nor could development have been sustained in the absence of a steady supply of low cost, high quality British and Irish manufactures. Indeed, the presence of an agent in London was a key factor in the development of the Irish plantations at St. Croix and given the extent to which Irish wholesalers imported contraband British and Irish goods and equipment, it is likely that their presence assisted in the overall development of the island. As the island's economy boomed, slave labour continued to be in short supply. As a result, Irish merchants developed a system of importing slaves directly from Africa. These slaves, like the low cost manufactures, were paid for out of the proceeds of the sale of contraband French sugars in ports such as Hamburg and Amsterdam. Although many of them were destined for labouring on St. Croix, the vast majority imported in 1760 were intended for the French market. This is evident when we compare the port records of Christiansted, with those of the British Admiralty. Indeed, through the examination of these records, we are given an insight into the convoluted commercial deceptions that characterised the 'Dutch' trade with Northern Europe.



## Chapter Five

### St. Croix 1750 to 1766

#### The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

Tuite's desire to develop the Crucian sugar industry centred on his vision to create a Catholic haven for his Irish associates. He hoped that at St. Croix they could reside in harmony with those of other faiths and openly practice their religion, something they could not do at the British islands. Overall, he wanted to provide them with an opportunity to establish plantations and to become active participants in the island's society. By the end of the war, Tuite had achieved his objectives and the Quadripartite Concern was one of many Irish planting ventures whose mark on the Crucian landscape is still visible today. Estates such as Enfield Green, Bog of Allen, Castle Bourke and Butler's Bay, to name but a few, testify to the Irish exploitation of land and African labour during this period. By the close of the Seven Years' War, Baker, Ryan, Bodkin and Tuite continued to expand their interests at the island and at this time their plantations represented a considerable area.

Christensen estimates that on St. Croix in 1754, there were just over two hundred and fourteen sugar plantations, eighty seven plantations were assigned to cotton planting and sixty three lots dedicated to the cultivation of provisions.<sup>1</sup> Despite the Cadastral audit of 1759 however, there are no conclusive figures on the actual amount of land under cultivation during the war.<sup>2</sup> As discussed in Chapter two, it frequently took a number of years to clear a plantation entirely. In addition, due to rapid changes in landownership and land use, it is difficult to establish how many plantations remained uncultivated or how many were dedicated to cotton, sugar or provisions.<sup>3</sup> What was clear however, was the fact that the island's economy was thriving and that its population was steadily increasing. In the six years that followed the Crown takeover of St. Croix, the island's overall population increased by fifty per cent which represented an increase of over four

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<sup>1</sup> Christensen, 'Kolonisamfundet på St. Croix', p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Transcript of the cadastral survey of 1759, DNA, Generaltoldkammeret-ældre del Vestindisk-guineisk renteskriverkontor, 1690 – 1767 (365), 'Om Vestindien', series: 411, no folio.

<sup>3</sup> Land use changed frequently during the island's frontier phase. For more on the difficulty in estimating the amount of land under cultivation see, George F. Tyson Jr., 'On the periphery of the peripheries: the cotton plantations of St. Croix, Danish West Indies, 1735-1815,' *Journal of Caribbean History*, 26(1992), pp. 1-36, p. 3.

## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

and half thousand African slaves and four hundred and fifty Europeans.<sup>4</sup> This increase in the number of slaves at the island shows that St. Croix was experiencing a rapid expansion of its plantation economy. In chapter four, we saw how the capital required to the development of the plantations was facilitated by access to illicit intra-imperial trade. In turn, this encouraged the legal sugar trade that continued to sustain the refining industry in Denmark throughout the eighteenth century. It has been estimated that in 1755, St. Croix produced one and a half million pounds of sugar annually.<sup>5</sup> By 1762, the final year of the war, over five point three million pounds of sugar were shipped to Copenhagen alone. Given that this is the figure recorded in the official weighbooks, it is likely that actual production exceeded it.<sup>6</sup>

By 1761, there were over three thousand two hundred European settlers at St. Croix and there were a number of different individuals of different nationalities and creeds residing there. In the previous year, it had been estimated that around two hundred and fifty Irish settlers had made St. Croix their home.<sup>7</sup> Of these settlers, around a dozen were involved in large scale sugar planting.<sup>8</sup> Of the rest, around one hundred worked as overseers on the plantations, while another one hundred and fifty lived in and around Christiansted. As a result, the Irish population represented just over seven percent of the overall European population.<sup>9</sup> In relation to the production of sugar however, that produced on Irish plantations represented over sixteen percent of the total that was officially shipped to Copenhagen in 1762. (Figure 5 ). Although there were relatively few Irish planters, they tended to own more than one plantation each. This was the certainly the case with the members of the Quadripartite Concern who, once they had sold their individual shares in that venture, came to invest in a number of other plantations at the island. This is evident in Beck's map of 1766.

The fact that Tuite was honoured as the founder of the colony at St. Croix suggests that his initial vision for the island was a success. Tuite provided the expertise to encourage the development of St. Croix as it progressed from a malarial frontier to a thriving plantation economy. As discussed in Chapter two, his strategy involved the establishment of self-financing plantations that, after a short number of years, could become debt free. Thus, any expense incurred by the plantation was paid out of its

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<sup>4</sup> In 1755, the total population was 10200 and in 1761 it was 15242. In the same time, the slave population increased from 8897 to 13489. Accordingly, the ratio of Europeans to Africans rose from 1: 6.8 in 1755, to 1:7.7 in 1761 see Sveistrup, *Bidrag til de tidligere Dansk-Vestindiske øers økonomiske historie*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>5</sup> Sveistrup, *Bidrag til de tidligere Dansk-Vestindiske øers økonomiske historie*, p. 72.

<sup>6</sup> CWB, vol., 12, 1762.

<sup>7</sup> Fenning, 'The mission to St. Croix', pp. 84-5.

<sup>8</sup> The following names appear most frequently in the records of the Weighmaster in Christiansted: Lawrence Bodkin, Theobald Bourke, John Bradshaw, Mathew Farrell, Andrew Irwin, John Irwin, Nathan Kelly, Christopher McEvoy, Henry Ryan, Peter Penhony and Nicholas Tuite, see figure 5a.

<sup>9</sup> Of the 3289 white settlers, around 250 were Irish. This equates to approximately 7.6%.

## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

produce. As land prices rose, the plantation soon became worth more than was paid for it and any profit was true profit and stayed with the planter. In all, the ability to create this kind of plantation was heavily reliant on unrestricted access to international markets within the region where plantation produce and European goods could be bought and sold for the best prices possible. The Irish plantations provided employment for Irish overseers and managers. Meanwhile, commerce at the island encouraged a number of smaller traders and seamen to settle at Christiansted. Unlike at the British colonies, Irish Catholics soon formed part of the island's civic life and also became members of the local militia. Indeed, Tuite also established a site for a Catholic Church at the island and sought Irish members of the clergy to administer to the community there. In all, it appeared that the Catholic haven envisaged by Tuite had come to pass.

In the post-war period however, it soon became clear that Tuite's idyllic society was not developing as he had hoped. First, changes were afoot in the way in which the Danish Crown administered the island. Having finally found its feet, the Crown wished to impose its rule on the islanders who had been, for all intents and purposes, living in a lawless society. In order to increase revenue into the Crown's coffers, tight restrictions were placed on trade. This, combined with the overall slump in the global economy, meant that St. Croix ceased to be the unofficial entrepôt it had been during the war. With the contraction of trade, the plantations were starved of capital and desperately needed to acquire a new source of cash were they to continue to produce sugar. As we will see, Dutch banks became the solution and with the streams of easy credit that flooded the island's economy, sugar continued to be produced in abundance. Originally, the associates involved in the Quadripartite Concern prided themselves on the establishment of self-financing plantations that were free from debt. Indeed, Baker believed that this was the cornerstone to their success. With the abundance of Dutch credit however, there was little incentive to maintain this principle and many planters sank into debt.

With limited access to supplementary incomes, some members of the Irish merchant-planter group became involved in the administration of the island. Although this allowed them to function as full members of Crucian society, there is a sense of irony in the way in which some of these roles served to oppress others within the community. While Nicholas Tuite created a niche market in advising English-speakers on Danish law, some members of the Irish community exploited the demand for such advice. Meanwhile, involvement in the militia showed that the Irish had transcended the closed society at the British Leeward islands. Conversely, it also gave them a role in the violent suppression of the Crucian Slave rebellion of 1759. Although Tuite was given leave to establish a

## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

Catholic church at the island, few members of the Irish community were prepared to pay for it. This suggests that the merchant-planter community did not consider their residency at St. Croix as a permanent one. As we will see however, those of more modest means, many of whom had migrated directly from Ireland, did not hold this view.

### **Cartographic representation of Irish plantations, 1766**

In this section, I will use Beck's map of 1754, and his amended map of 1766, to show how the Irish community had expanded their holdings at the island. By the end of the War, Nicholas Tuite owned Richmond, along with thirteen other plots of land. Lawrence Bodkin owned fifteen plantations, John Baker owned three and Henry Ryan owned one and a half. Other Irish merchant-planters who had been attracted to the island during the war included Christopher McEvoy, Mathew Farrall and Theobald Bourke. Their plantations were also substantial and, as we can see from Figure 5, their contribution to the overall export of sugar from Christiansted was considerable. Although sugarcane dominated the island's agriculture, cotton plantations were also an important part of the island's economy. While the sugar plantations were generally owned by affluent settlers, the cotton plantations tended to be owned by those of more modest means. As a result, while ventures such as the Quadripartite Concern give an insight into the upper echelons of society at St. Croix, documents relating to cotton plantations give description of the lower orders of settler, many of whom were also Irish.

### **Cotton plantations**

In 1761, at the height of the war the island exported four hundred and eighteen bales of cotton, weighing over ninety thousand pounds, to Copenhagen, New York and Altona.<sup>10</sup> The trade continued to thrive in the subsequent years and in 1768, eight hundred and ninety two bales were exported, weighing over two hundred thousand pounds.<sup>11</sup> At St. Croix in 1760, a pound of cotton could fetch between twenty three and twenty four skillings per pound. This compares with sugar, which fetched around five skillings per pound.<sup>12</sup> Although more lucrative than sugar on a pound for pound basis, the collection of a pound of cotton was more labour intensive than a pound of sugar.

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<sup>10</sup> CWB, Vol. 11, 1761.

<sup>11</sup> Tyson, 'On the periphery of the peripheries', p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> In 1760, sugar fetched between 5.5 and 5.75 rixdollars per hundredweight, this equates to five sk. per pound. There were ninety six *Skillinger* in each *Rigsdaler* see, McCusker, *Money and exchange*, p. 85 and Willis, 'The trade between North America', pp. 66-7.

**Figure 5**

**Sugar exports by Irish planters to  
Europe, 1762**

<b>Planter</b>	<b>Sugar (lbs)</b>
Bodkin and Farrell	27522
Laurence Bodkin	133162
Theobald Bourke	13032
John Bradshaw	84055
Mathew Farrell	93844
Andrew Irwin	104471
John Irwin	9258
Nathan Kelly	18280
Christopher McEvoy	59882
Henry Ryan	279050
Peter Penthony	8982
Nicholas Tuite	349471
Total Irish Exports from Christiansted	1,181,009 lbs
Total Exports from Christiansted	7,127,054 lbs

*Figures compiled from the Weighbooks at Christiansted,  
CWB, Vol., 12, 1762.*

## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

Cotton plantations were long associated with individuals who did not have the means to invest in sugar.<sup>13</sup> These plantations represented a third of the total plantations at St. Croix and tended to be located in the east of the island where the soil was less suitable for the cultivation of sugar. As a result, land price in these areas were less than elsewhere, and were owned by planters of more modest means.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, a good income could be earned through cotton planting alone. Haagensen noted the advantages of the cotton plantation for the lower overheads associated with the trade. Because of the more leisurely nature of collecting the product, slaves were less likely to become ill on these plantations. Indeed, on a standard lot, with the help of two healthy slaves, Haagenson estimated that a planter could produce two to three thousand pounds of cotton per year. Even on smaller plantations, it was common for individuals to enjoy a good standard of living on an annual cotton crop of seven hundred pounds.<sup>15</sup>

### **Sugar Plantations**

In 1766, the plantation at Sion Farm (Figure 5a) continued its production of sugar. Tuite's brother-in-law John Bradshaw was in partnership with him and was also involved in the subsequent purchase of an adjoining three plantations, which they named Sion Hill (Queen's Quarter, 22, 23 and 24). Another plantation, Strawberry Hill, also belonged to Tuite (Queen's Quarter 29 and 33a.) As we can see in Figure 5a, all of these plantations had their own windmills, which would suggest that they were well-capitalised. With the dissolution of the Quadripartite Concern, Tuite came to own Richmond, the plantation that was initially owned by Lawrence Bodkin (Figure 5b). Beck's representation of this plantation shows that it too had a windmill. Moreover, the plot that had been assigned to the Moravian Church remained at the site and is depicted as a small rectangle to the south of the plantation.

By 1766, the plantation once known as Concordia had long since been divided among the four partners of the Quadripartite Concern. As we can see in Figure 5c, Henry Ryan was in possession of plantation 4a and plantation 9. Justice Moth appears to have come into ownership of plantations 4a, 5a and 8. Meanwhile, Lawrence Bodkin owned plantations 6, 5b and several plantations to the north of Concordia. Baker's name is not to be found here. It appears that once he had sold his share in the Quadripartite Concern, he made further investments at Plessen's Plantation (Figure 5d) In this figure, we can see that Baker owned a number of plantations in Prince's Quarter and continued to be in partnership with William Ryan's heirs who were his wife's nephews, William, John and

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<sup>13</sup> Oldendorp, *History of the mission of the Evangelical Brethren*, p. 145.

<sup>14</sup> Tyson, 'On the periphery of the peripheries', pp. 1-36.

<sup>15</sup> Haagensen, *Description of the Island of St. Croix*, p. 40.

## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

Henry Ryan. Owing plantations 12, 21 and 20, Baker's plantation had his own windmill. Meanwhile the Ryans, who owned 28, 29 and 13, also owned a windmill.<sup>16</sup>

Also in Prince's Quarter was Theobald Bourke, a merchant-planter who migrated to St. Croix after the Crown takeover in 1754. His sugar plantation, Castle Bourke, was located in the Prince's Quarter, number 32 and 33. Son of Richard Bourke of Ballyvorreen, Co. Limerick, Theobald was a distant cousin of Edmund Bourke of Ballynaguard, MP for Bristol. The plantation name, 'Castle Bourke' had its namesake in the ancestral seat of the Bourke family which stood in Co. Mayo. In 1756, Theobald married Jane Skerrett of Montserrat and he thus became a brother-in-law of Nicholas Tuite as his wife and Tuite's wife were sisters. Jane and Theobald had three sons, one of whom died in childhood, the other two Richard and Edmond were born at St. Croix in 1756 and 1761 respectively.<sup>17</sup> Both attended St. Omer's and Douai where they received a Jesuit education.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, Bourke spent a good deal of time in Europe where he passed his winters.<sup>19</sup> Owing just under two standard sized plantations, Bourke did not possess a windmill and made do with a cattle mill. Given that a river flowed through the southern part of his plantation, it is likely that Bourke used it to ship his sugar from the plantation to the port at Christiansted. In 1762, Bourke shipped fourteen fads of sugar to Copenhagen totalling over thirteen thousand pounds in weight. Although Castle Bourke was not the most productive Irish plantation, Bourke appears to have accrued a considerable fortune from his involvement in the sugar trade.<sup>20</sup>

Adjoining Plessen's Plantation was the plantation of Andrew Irwin. Following the war, Irwin continued to plant at St. Croix although he also established a plantation at the ceded island of Grenada.<sup>21</sup> At St. Croix, his plantation continued to thrive and his exports to Copenhagen in 1762 were significant. As we can see in Figure 5f, Irwin's plantation was Number 37 in Prince's Quarter and it had what appears to be a substantial windmill. In the north west corner of the plantation, Irwin had access to a road which led east and then south, giving him access to 'Neger Bay'. Another Irwin in Prince's Quarter was John Irwin, apparently unrelated to Andrew, who owned a large plantation adjoining that of Theobald Bourke (Figure 5f)

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<sup>16</sup> As we saw in Chapter Two, John Baker and the Ryan's had sold this plantation by 1770, p. 79.

<sup>17</sup> *Pedigree of Bourke of Ballyvorreen...*, NLI, G.O., Ms. 159, pp. 257-9.

<sup>18</sup> Holt, *St. Omer's and Bruges Colleges*, p. 44.

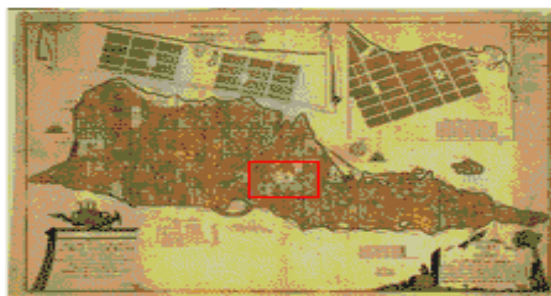
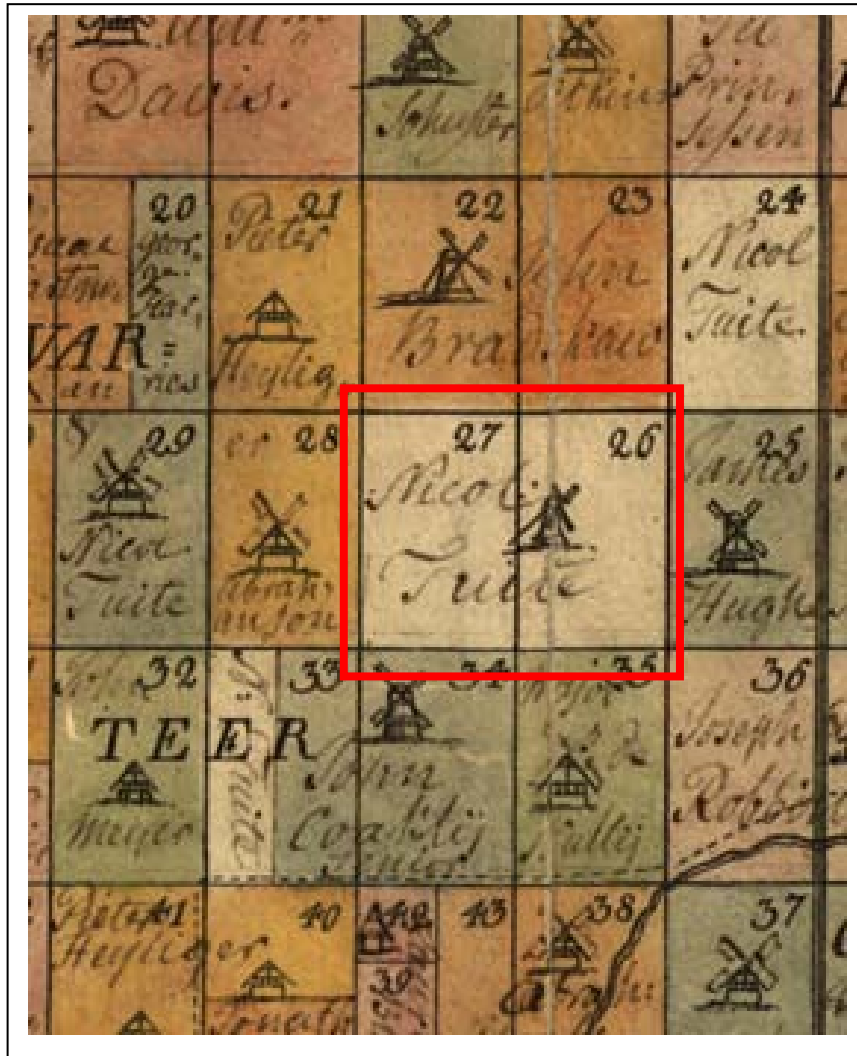
<sup>19</sup> Fenning, 'The mission to St. Croix,' pp. 75-122.

<sup>20</sup> See discussion of Bourke's estate below, p. 79.

<sup>21</sup> 'In the cause of the appeal touching *The Adventure*', deposition of James Boyle French, 13 July 1764, TNA, HCA 32/258, Ship: *The Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-61.

The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

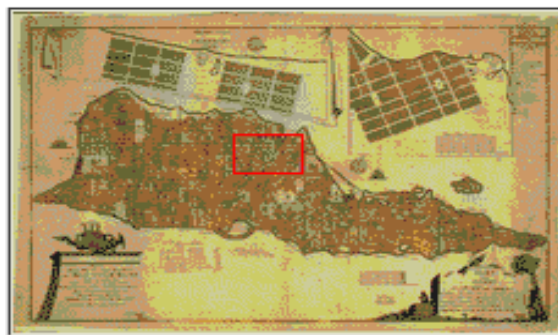
**Figure 5a:** Sion Farm, outlined in red.  
Beck, 1766.



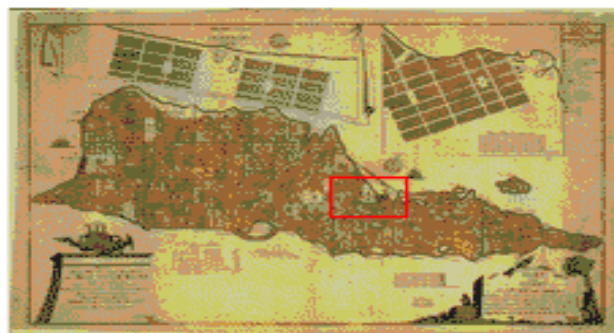


The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

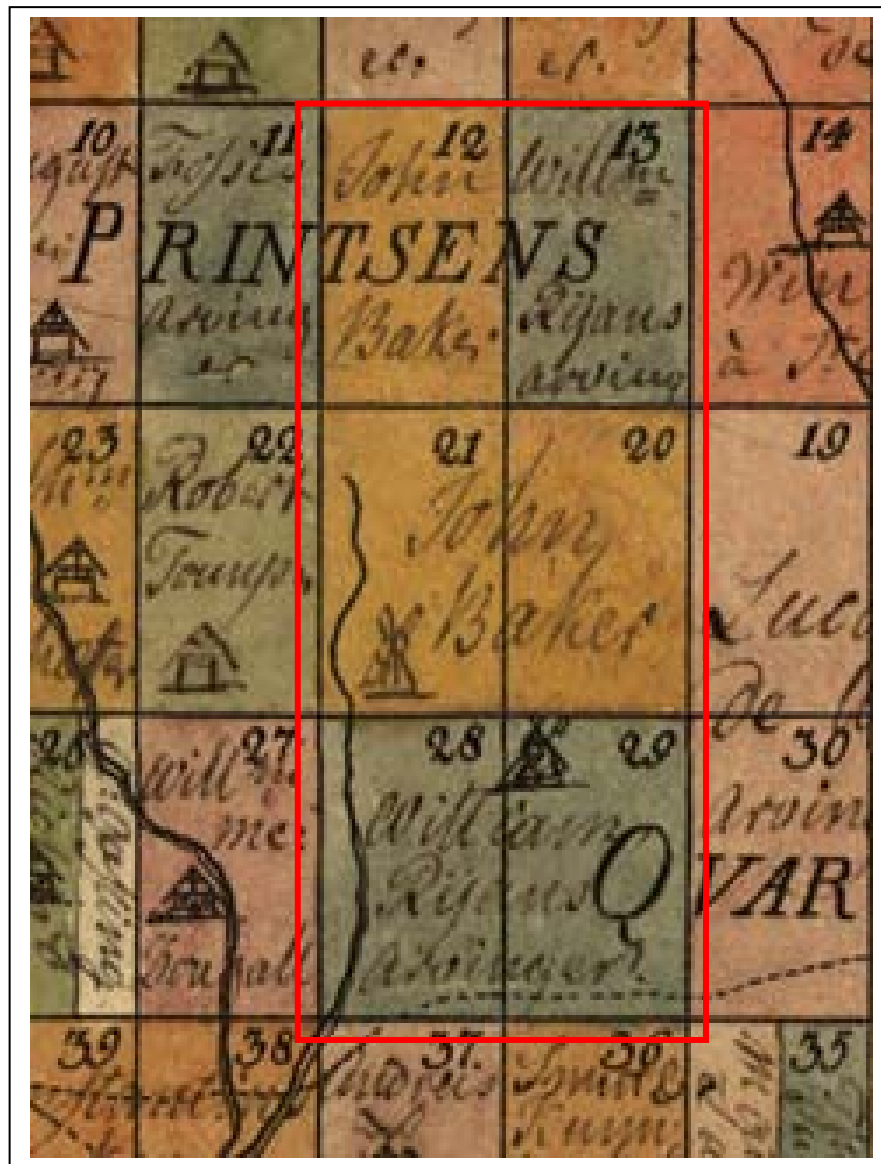
**Figure 5:** Concordia, outlined in red.  
Beck, 1766.



**Figure 5c:** Richmond.  
Beck, 1766.



**Figure 5d:** Plessen's Plantation  
Beck, 1766.



The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

**Figure 5e:** Castle Bourke  
Beck, 1766.



The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

**Figure 5f:** Andrew Irwin and John Irwin Beck, 1766.



## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

Despite the fact that John Irwin did not own a windmill, relying instead on a cattle mill, he exported just over nine thousand pounds of sugar to Copenhagen in 1762. This plantation did not have access to a road, but was situated beside a substantial river which more than likely gave him access to 'King's Bay' on the south coast of the island. John Irwin subsequently migrated to St. Eustatius where his will was composed in 1778. In it, Irwin bequeathed among other things, three hundred pounds to 'the stressed poor of St. Croix' and one thousand pounds to each child of his brother, William Irwin from Ireland.<sup>22</sup>

### **Changes in commercial policies at the Danish West Indies**

In this section I will outline the commercial policies that fundamentally changed the Crucian economy. During this time, commercial activity at St. Croix was restricted in order to encourage the Freeport at St. Thomas. Following the war, Danish and British commercial policies fundamentally changed the economic conditions which prevailed at St. Croix since the Crown takeover. The post-war economic slump which followed the Peace of Paris in 1763 meant that many planters were forced to avail of large amounts of Dutch capital in order to maintain their production. The brand of commerce promoted by Nicholas Tuite allowed St. Croix to develop its sugar industry without the need for large-scale investment by the Danish Crown. Although an efficient and cost-effective way of establishing a colony, the trading methods prevalent at the island did not always ensure that profits were repatriated to Denmark. On the contrary, it soon became clear that the Crown was losing a considerable amount of revenue while private enterprise at the island continued to prosper. As a result, the Danish authorities were anxious to recoup the revenue it appeared to be losing through illegal practices at St. Croix. Following the Crown takeover in 1754, the debt of over 1.2 million rixdollars that had been accrued during the Company era became the responsibility of the State. At the end of the War, a large proportion of this debt was still outstanding. In 1761, General Clausen estimated that, Denmark was losing an annual revenue of around thirty thousand rixdollars.

Wishing to avail of the wartime opportunities that were available to neutral shipping, no changes were made to Danish commercial policy at the island until after the Peace of Paris in 1763.<sup>23</sup> Once the colony's sugar industry had been developed however, the illicit commercial activities that had prevailed at the island was no longer tolerated. As

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<sup>22</sup> Will of John Irwin, St. Eustatius, composed: 25 June 1778, proved: 2 November 1780, TNA, PROB 11/1071 [Image Ref: 176]

<sup>23</sup> Clausen's report, along with the response of the Danish Crown, is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four, p. 113 See, Møller and Olsen, *Toldvæsenet i Dansk Vestindien*, pp. 57-8.

## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

the war came to a close, Tuite's unique style of trading, that tended to skirt the boundaries of international commercial regulations, was effectively outlawed by Danish legislation. This had the effect of limiting private enterprise and intra-imperial trade at St. Croix, and also served to establish Copenhagen as the natural locus for the organisation of trade at the island. From a Danish perspective, the commercial policies which followed the war were a way of asserting its authority over an island population which had effectively become a law unto themselves.<sup>24</sup> By the end of the Seven Years' War, merchants at St. Croix had become accustomed to, and reliant on, inter-imperial trade. Commerce that was officially deemed illegal by the Danish authorities in Copenhagen was encouraged by local trade conditions and lax enforcement of colonial commercial regulations. In addition, as discussed in Chapter four, the policies pursued by the strongly mercantilist Danish regime became increasingly contradictory as the state placed a growing emphasis on its neutral wartime carrying trade. At St. Croix, merchants and planters alike took advantage of the carrying trade, which allowed them to sustain their production of sugar. Once the war had ended however, trading conditions at St. Croix became increasingly regulated as the opportunities for inter-imperial trade became fewer and profits fell.<sup>25</sup>

In 1764, the Danish government imposed legislation which reversed the decree of April 1755. During the war years, St. Croix overshadowed its two sister islands, and became the primary hub for sugar production and inter-imperial trade. As a result of the decree of 1764 however, the island of St. Thomas became the principal port of the Danish West Indies. For the previous eleven years, St. Thomas' trade had been severely damaged by the success of the sugar industry at St. Croix. Although excise duties had remained low at the former island throughout the war, international merchants were attracted to St. Croix due to the abundance of sugar and European wares on sale there. As a result of the decree of 1755, a sense of 'economic dualism' had been fostered among the Danish islands as St. Thomas fell from its former status as the chief Danish West Indian colony.<sup>26</sup>

The decree of 1764 also allowed the Danish Crown to strengthen its hand at St. Croix. By declaring St. Thomas as the primary Danish West Indian port, it was envisaged that St. Croix would become more focussed on the intensive production of

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<sup>24</sup> The failure to enforce commercial regulations at St. Croix was investigated by General Clausen in the late 1750s. Tuite was implicated as one of the chief instigators of illegal trade and was also involved in official bribery, see Chapter Four, p.113.

<sup>25</sup> For an indication of the planters' frustration see poem quoted by Westergaard, *The Danish West Indies*, pp. 244-5.

<sup>26</sup> Between 1755 and 1761, the population at St. Thomas, formerly the chief Danish island, declined by some ten percent as a large number of individuals migrated to St. Croix. In addition from the date of the Crown takeover to 26 May 1756, not a single Danish ship called at its principal port, Charlotte Amalie, see Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien*, p. 80.

## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

sugar cane, while St. John's would dedicate itself to agriculture.<sup>27</sup> This shift in emphasis marked the beginning of a new political era for the Danish islands and can be considered as signalling the end of the frontier phase at St. Croix. There, the previous decade of virtually unregulated trade had served its purpose by allowing for the island's rapid development. It has been noted however that the profits resulting from this period did not find their way to Denmark. Instead, a small number of individuals, frequently expatriates of other nations, were the keepers of the majority of the island's wealth.<sup>28</sup> Having outsourced the development of the sugar industry at St. Croix, the Crown moved to gain more control and to create a more regulated economy which would serve to meet its own needs, and those of its Copenhagen based merchants.<sup>29</sup>

From the perspective of merchants at the Danish islands, the once lucrative trade in plantation goods that had flourished between St. Croix, the French West Indies and the British North American colonies was now unprofitable. Due to the fact that its wartime status as an unofficial entrepôt was now obstructed by the Danish authorities and increasingly stringent British regulations on North American trade, its role as a war time entrepôt was now redundant. As a result, the focus of trade shifted to Copenhagen, Altona and other ports within the Kingdom of Denmark-Norway.

Other measures were also taken to limit illegal trading and to maximise state control of the island. In 1765, the notoriously corrupt governor of St. Croix, Baron Von Prock, a man who was much admired by his fellow islanders, was encouraged to step down from his post. From 1754, Von Prock had ruled the island with such benevolence towards merchants and planters, that he was remembered with much affection long after his departure from St. Croix. It has been suggested elsewhere that Von Prock was determined to accrue a substantial fortune using whatever means were available to him. For example, he enjoyed an enormous salary of four thousand rixdollars per annum where his predecessor had earned a mere one thousand. Von Prock was also known to have Danish sugars, rum and cash advanced to him directly, instead of to the Royal coffers in Copenhagen. He was also generous with tax exemptions and allowed islanders to evade duties and taxes.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, it was well known that Von Prock was prepared to issue false bills of lading and clearance certificates for a fee.<sup>31</sup> Of most significance to

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<sup>27</sup> St. Thomas was subsequently declared a Freeport, however a raft of laws regarding inter-imperial trade remained to ensure that certain aspects of commerce there were entirely regulated by the Danish authorities, see, Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien*, p. 64.

<sup>28</sup> Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien*, p. 80.

<sup>29</sup> Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien*, p. 77.

<sup>30</sup> Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien*, pp. 27-8.

<sup>31</sup> Olsen and Møller, *Toldvæsenet i Dansk Vestindien*, p. 53; Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien*, p. 68.



## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

the colonists at St. Croix was Von Prock's pro-planter approach.<sup>32</sup> This was most likely due to the fact that he himself owned a plantation in King's Quarter.<sup>33</sup>

Such a conflict of interest was common at St. Croix where many government officials also maintained plantations. Von Prock's reign was so popular, that in 1774, eight years after his return to Europe, a newspaper on a neighbouring British island remembered him with great fondness:

When Heaven, indulgent, bless'd this land  
With peace and plenty crown'd  
Like heavenly dew Von Prock's hand  
Dispensed his kindness round...<sup>34</sup>

It is telling that the memory of his flexible stewardship of the Danish Islands endured. Indeed, such measures made Von Prock directly responsible for the development of the neutral carrying trade, both legal and illegal, that characterised St. Croix during the Seven Years' War. Before leaving, Von Prock issued a general pardon for any planter or merchant who had been involved in illegal trade, smuggling or tax evasion.<sup>35</sup>

Although a blind eye was turned to such practices during the war, in the post war period, once the island's sugar industry had been established, these practices were no longer tolerated. As a result, the positive sentiments of the islanders towards Von Prock were not shared by the administration in Copenhagen and it was requested that he stand down as Governor in 1766.<sup>36</sup> His replacement was Peter Clausen, one of the primary investigators into corruption among Customs' officers at St. Croix in the late 1750s. At the close of the War, Clausen had been tasked to make efficiencies in the ambit of tax collection in 1765 and was appointed as Governor in 1766. Immediately, Clausen took it upon himself to collect the Crown's taxes and duties with a zeal unknown in the time of

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<sup>32</sup> Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien*, p. 72.

<sup>33</sup> This was plantation number 20, situated between Mathew Farril and William Irwin's land, see Cartouche entitled 'Sucker Planteurernes, Navne og Plantagemes...' on J. M. Beck, *Tilforladelige Kort over Eylandet St. Croix udi America*. (Copenhagen, 1754 with amendments in 1766) Department of Maps, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

<sup>34</sup> This is a quotation from the *Caribbean and General Gazette*, February 5 1774. It appears in Westergaard, *The Danish West Indies*, p. 244.

<sup>35</sup> Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien*, p. 68.

<sup>36</sup> In 1766, the government decided to replace Von Prock as general governor of the West Indies and he was recalled to Copenhagen. There, he was given command of Iceland and the Faeroe Islands. Finding the climate disagreeable, he returned to Copenhagen where he was made chief administrator of the district of Copenhagen. In 1771 he was dismissed by Struensee who found him guilty of negligence. He died in 1780 in Copenhagen see, Brika, *Dansk Biografisk Lexikon*, xiii, pp. 302-3.

## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

his predecessor. The era of *dispensationspolitik* was over as Clausen came to consider tax and debt collection as his primary responsibility.<sup>37</sup>

Given the sharp contraction of the world economy, planters and merchants at St. Croix had come to rely on the dispensations offered by Governor Von Prock who did not collect taxes, as rigorously as he should have done. With increasing amounts of sugar being seized by Clausen's administration, planters found themselves with less sugar to sell on their own account. This meant that the supplementary commercial incomes they had become accustomed to during the War, were no longer achievable. Moreover, the sugars that the planters customarily set aside for shipment to Dutch money lenders, was now diverted to the Royal Coffers. This had the immediate effect of increasing the Crown's revenue from St. Croix. As an administrative policy however, it was tremendously short-sighted. Unable to meet their loan repayments or to develop their properties, many planters simply fell deeper into debt.<sup>38</sup>

Although many Irish individuals maintained links with other islands and commercial contact with Europe, there was no large scale Irish exodus from St. Croix after the War. The indebtedness into which many settlers fell did not always have a negative impact on their apparent prosperity. As a result, merchant-planters such as Christopher MacEvoy and Theobald Bourke, both recipients of large Dutch loans in 1767, still managed to sustain affluent lifestyles and spent the winters in Europe and the summers at St. Croix.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, Andrew Irwin maintained his heavily indebted plantation at St. Croix, while seeking opportunities at the newly ceded island of Grenada.<sup>40</sup> Despite the fact that Irish Catholics had secured their own plantations, their inability to trade caused them to mortgage their properties. This was something that Tuite and his associates had deliberately avoided over the course of their initial investments in the island.<sup>41</sup>

### Public office

As we have seen, economic circumstances limited access to inter-imperial trade in the mid-1760s. The consequence of this was that planters were not in a position to

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<sup>37</sup> Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien*, p. 68.

<sup>38</sup> Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien*, p. 68.

<sup>39</sup> Fenning, 'The mission to St. Croix,' p. 121. In 1767, Christopher MacEvoy took a personal loan of 254,726 pieces of eight, while Theobald Bourke was the recipient of 161,032 pieces of eight see, List of Dutch Loans carried by planters at St. Croix, Amsterdam, 24 June 1775, DNA, Den Vestindiske Gælds Likvidationskommission, St. Croix. 1773-1787 (681), 'Sager vedr. Det Ter Borchske Lån', Series: 46.28.1, fos. 93-9.

<sup>40</sup> Despite relocating to Grenada after the War, Irwin was in a position to take a Dutch loan of 108,600 pieces of eight against his assets at St. Croix in 1767 see, List of Dutch Loans carried by planters at St. Croix, Amsterdam, 24 June 1775, DNA, Den Vestindiske Gælds Likvidationskommission, St. Croix. 1773-1787 (681), 'Sager vedr. Det Ter Borchske Lån', Series: 46.28.1, fos. 93-9. Regarding Irwin's move to Grenada, see 'The cause of the appeal touching *The Adventure*', deposition of James Boyle French, 13 July 1764, TNA, HCA 32/258, Ship: *The Adventure*, Master: Tibbald, 1760-61.

<sup>41</sup> LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to Mr. Lucas, London, 29 October 1751, fo. 38.

## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

supplement their income in the way to which they had become accustomed to. Some merchant-planters, as citizens of St. Croix, exercised their right to hold public office which, as discussed in Chapter One, would not have been possible for them at a British colony. While Henry Ryan held the position of 'war officer' he also held the title of 'Royal Commissioner' in 1762.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, both Nicholas Tuite and Theobald Bourke held the positions of local councillors.<sup>43</sup> For educated gentlemen, other options were also available. British laws regulating inheritance were of no use to those who possessed capital or property beyond that jurisdiction. As a result, the families of British subjects who owned property at St. Croix were obliged to seek expert legal advice on how to negotiate the Danish legal system. This was time consuming, expensive and frustrating for families as there were very few English speaking experts who possessed the relevant skills and training to undertake such cases. Given the Irish Catholic community's familiarity with British conveyancing, it was only a matter of time before they too were involved in the conveyancing of property owned by British subjects within the Danish legal jurisdiction.<sup>44</sup>

Nicholas Tuite was well versed in the area of Danish law. By financing the English translation of the laws which governed the Danish Empire, Tuite established himself as a legal advisor to English speakers who were engaged in business at St. Croix.<sup>45</sup> In this light, it is not surprising that the family of Thomas Dorsett, a British subject who owned property and slaves at Montserrat and St. Croix, approached Tuite for advice when they ran into difficulty. Tuite recommended that they act quickly to prevent the case from entering the bureaucratic 'Danish Dealings Court' and to hire Christopher McEvoy as their attorney at St. Croix.<sup>46</sup> Unfortunately, the Dorsett sisters were unable to avoid delays, nor did they secure the services of McEvoy. As a result, the administration of the estate took over a decade and appears never to have been fully finalised.

Dorsett had made generous provisions for his sisters in a will dated 5 March 1760. Despite this, the Dorsett sisters were faced with the complexities of West Indian bureaucracy in two jurisdictions and two languages. In addition to these basic complications, the specialist business of Danish conveyancing through the medium of the English language appears to have been a lucrative trade. Delays were common and

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<sup>42</sup> Christensen, 'Kolonisamfundet på St. Croix', p. 91 and CWB, vol. 12, 12 June 1762, Entry # 273.

<sup>43</sup> Bourke was a *Justitsråd* and Tuite was a *Cammeråd* see, Christensen, 'Kolonisamfundet på St. Croix', pp. 92-3.

<sup>44</sup> Although many British subjects opted to become subjects of the Crown of Denmark, this was not always recognised by the British authorities. In addition, the extended families of such individuals often resided in Britain and had no connection with the Danish Empire see, 'The Papers of Thomas Dorsett', TNA, J 90/418.

<sup>45</sup> Anon, *The Danish Laws: or, The Code of Christian the fifth, Faithfully translated for the use of the English inhabitants of the Danish settlements in America* (London, 1756).

<sup>46</sup> Mrs. Skerret (relative of Nicholas Tuite), London to Miss Dorsett, London, no date, 'The Papers of Thomas Dorsett', TNA, J 90/418.

## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

those involved in the administration of such cases could name their price. Thomas Meade was attorney for the Dorsett case at Montserrat, but when it came to Dorsett's estate at St. Croix, Meade claimed to be 'ignorant of the laws and customs of that island' and referred them to his associate, William Manning in London.<sup>47</sup> When approached, Manning, who was a close relative of the Ryans of Montserrat, offered to have the will 'approved by the King of Denmark for a fee.'<sup>48</sup> Other fees involved included twenty five percent tax due to the Danish Crown when transferring money from its jurisdiction to another. This however, could be reduced: 'by contrivance you might get off for 10%'.<sup>49</sup> The Dorsett case suggests that the Irish community at St. Croix identified a niche area in the administration of wills and property within the Danish colonial setting. Not only did they practice the law there, they found ways of profiting from it also.

This was also the case when it came to the administration of the Dutch loans. In this instance, a number of Irish merchant-planters became agents for the financial institutions that had loaned money on difficult terms to their fellow planters. Although the first wave of officially sanctioned, Danish plantation loans and mortgages from Dutch banks were to begin in 1768, there is evidence that many private loans were issued to the proprietors of Danish plantations before this date.<sup>50</sup> The move towards Dutch, as opposed to British capital, was due to the vast amount of capital held by Dutch institutions during the eighteenth century. Wealth inherited from the times of the Dutch Golden Age, meant that interest rates on Dutch savings were the lowest in Europe. At less than three per cent, such interest conditions drove Dutch capital abroad in search of more lucrative investment opportunities, many of which could easily command double the Dutch savings rate.<sup>51</sup> Other advantages to borrowing from a Dutch bank included access to that Republic's thriving financial services market. Given the inherent risks associated with the sugar industry, together with the degree to which indebted planters tended to abscond to other islands, lending to sugar plantations was considered a high-risk activity. As a result, the terms and conditions offered by the Dutch banks were frequently harsh and unforgiving. A new wave of Dutch plantation loans ensued after the War and, despite their harsh terms, they were sanctioned by the Danish government, itself a recipient of large sums of Dutch finance. As before, the banking house of

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<sup>47</sup> Thomas Meade, Montserrat to Miss Dorsett, London, 3 September 1774, 'The Papers of Thomas Dorsett', TNA, J 90/418.

<sup>48</sup> William Manning, St. Mary's Axe, London to Miss Dorsett, London, 26 April 1774, 'The Papers of Thomas Dorsett', TNA, J 90/418.

<sup>49</sup> Thomas Meade, Montserrat to Miss Dorsett, London, 3 May 1776, 'The Papers of Thomas Dorsett', TNA, J 90/418.

<sup>50</sup> Frank C. Spooner, *Risks at sea: Amsterdam insurance and maritime Europe, 1766-1780* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 68.

<sup>51</sup> Charles Henry Wilson, *Anglo-Dutch commerce & finance in the eighteenth century* (Cambridge, 1941), p. 25.

## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

Abraham Ter Borch in Amsterdam was one of the primary lenders. Estimates of the extent of borrowing at the Danish islands suggest that some seven million guilders were loaned to the planters there. As before, the terms of these loans, which were considered to be high risk, were just as harsh as those issued during the war.<sup>52</sup>

The new loan conditions were less sustainable than earlier agreements and planters were often obliged to send their entire annual yields to Amsterdam. Given the involvement of the Danish authorities in the proceedings, allowances were made for duties and taxes payable to the Crown, 'all produce of the plantation for the duration of the mortgage (except what shall be paid in King's duties and taxes) shall be shipped and consigned to Abraham Ter Borch in Amsterdam...' As was the case during the war, when a planter borrowed from Ter Borch, he was also obliged to insure his Amsterdam bound cargo with the same firm. This situation was highly advantageous for the banking house as another branch of its business was drawn into the increasingly complex finance agreement. Finally, the capital was issued to the planter in the form of bills of exchange 'in favour of the debtor on the said Abraham Ter Borch.'<sup>53</sup> Spooner notes the symbiotic relationship which existed between the planter and the banking house. While the planter desperately needed credit, the banking house was keen to encourage repayments in kind. This arrangement tied the planters into a 'matrix of plantation agriculture, trade, finance and insurance' which more than compensated for the issuing of high-risk credit.<sup>54</sup>

Such easy access to Dutch credit ensured that many planters at St. Croix soon came to depend on expensive finance to sustain their livelihoods and lifestyles. Indeed, their non-compliance with the conditions of their loans was one of the factors which led to the fall of the Ter Borch bank in 1774.<sup>55</sup> This crisis had been looming the previous January when the bank wrote to its agent in St. Croix, 'for God's sake dear Sir make all possible dispatch to let us have the mortgages to the full amount...the retardment of those on the way has been most injurious to us...'<sup>56</sup> In general, planters simply could not sustain their repayments unless crop yields in any given year were high. As a result, when hurricane struck, or during times of drought, many planters defaulted. One such individual was George Lowry who reported that, following the hurricane of August

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<sup>52</sup> Loans and mortgages were often given on the value of the property together with the value of projected sugar production. Repayments were frequently made in sugar. When all was calculated, repayments on loans could be as high as 12% of annual produce, see Spooner, *Risks at sea*, pp. 66-9.

<sup>53</sup> Example of a blank mortgage agreement between Abraham Ter Borch and a St. Croix planter, no date, no folio, see DNA, Den Vestindiske Gælds Likvidationskommission, St. Croix. 1773-1787 (681), 'Sager vedr. Det Ter Borchske Lån' Series: 46.28.1.

<sup>54</sup> Spooner, *Risks at sea*, p. 69.

<sup>55</sup> A hurricane in August 1772 decimated many of the estates at St. Croix and at other leeward islands. Non-compliance with the conditions of the Ter Borch loans has been attributed to this event see, Spooner, *Risks at sea*, p. 94.

<sup>56</sup> Extract from a letter from Abraham Ter Borch to Christopher MacEvoy, Esq., 8 January 1773, see DNA, Den Vestindiske Gælds Likvidationskommission, St. Croix. 1773-1787 (681), 'Sager vedr. Det Ter Borchske Lån', Series: 46.28.1, fo. 115.

## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

1772, he 'could not possibly ship any to the loan as that was not enough to pay his taxes and feed his Negroes...'<sup>57</sup>

The failure of the Ter Borch bank encouraged the Danish Crown to intervene in the management of the debts of its West Indian planters. After all, it was in the best interests of the Danish Crown to ensure that the sugar industry at the islands was sustained at all costs. In doing so, it established a taskforce, the Royal Loan Liquidation Committee, which was aimed at estimating the level of indebtedness at St. Croix. The documents arising from these investigations are revealing in their candid descriptions of the loans issued during the post war economic slump. Several inconsistencies were revealed and it was found that some planters did not receive the full benefit of their loans, while others received far more than they entitled to.<sup>58</sup> It is unclear why the loans were administered so poorly. It can be shown however, that as the contraband market for plantation goods contracted after 1763, individuals who were formerly involved in this trade began to diversify their activities. Merchant-Planters of Irish descent, such as Christopher MacEvoy, Roger Farrell and Robert Tuite, all served as agents for the Ter Borch loans at St. Croix.<sup>59</sup> Their European business connections served them well as they arranged lines of finance and bills of exchange for local planters.

Under the terms of the Ter Borch mortgage agreements, all correspondence was 'to be conducted between the debtor and the agents only...'<sup>60</sup> As a result, MacEvoy, Tuite and Farrell enjoyed positions of power as they took responsibility for the allocation of funds and the collection of debts at St. Croix.<sup>61</sup> Other members of the Irish community also found their way into the world of plantation finance. The Crown's investigations recorded mortgages from institutions other than Ter Borch & Sons, such as the firm of Chippendale & Selby of Copenhagen. This firm was represented at St. Croix by Nicholas Tuite's grandson, Nicholas Tuite Selby, who appears to have dispensed mercy

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<sup>57</sup> DNA, Den vestinkiske gældslikvidationskommission St. Croix, 1779-1840 (681), 'Forhandlingsprotokoll', Series: 46.1.1. Folder: Sessionsprotokol for agenterne ved ter Borchske lån, fo. 12.

<sup>58</sup> Memorial of Christian VII, Copenhagen, March 1 1775 see, DNA, Den Vestindiske Gælds Likvidationskommission, St. Croix. 1773-1787 (681), 'Sager vedr. Det Ter Borchske Lån', Series: 46.28.1, fos. 15-21.

<sup>59</sup> DNA, Den vestinkiske gældslikvidationskommission St. Croix, 1779-1840 (681) 'Forhandlingsprotokoll', Series: 46.1.1. Folder: Sessionsprotokol for agenterne ved ter Borchske lån, no folio number.

<sup>60</sup> Example of a blank mortgage agreement between Abraham Ter Borch and a St. Croix planter, no date, DNA, Den Vestindiske Gælds Likvidationskommission, St. Croix. 1773-1787 (681), 'Sager vedr. Det Ter Borchske Lån' Series: 46.28.1.

<sup>61</sup> Robert Tuite, Christopher MacEvoy and Roger Ferrall are among those listed as Agents for the Ter Borch Loan, see DNA, Den vestinkiske gældslikvidationskommission St. Croix, 1779-1840 (681), 'Forhandlingsprotokoll', Series: 46.1.1. Folder: Sessionsprotokol for agenterne ved ter Borchske lån.

## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

arbitrarily in the collection of loans made to Irish planters.<sup>62</sup> One of the mortgagees was James Meade, who was originally of Montserrat. After falling into arrears due to 'mortality, fire and drought', he sought a 'prolongation of the terms of payment', so he could provide an annual sum of two hundred pounds sterling for his family. Nicholas Tuite Selby denied his requests however, stating that the bank wished to take a legal action against him, with a view to liquidating his assets and recouping their losses.<sup>63</sup>

After the war, the Danish sugar industry continued to thrive at St. Croix. This was primarily due to the planters' ability to secure mortgages and other loans to sustain production, develop their plantations and maintain a sufficient amount of slave labour. Had access to this capital not been available, it is unlikely that the island of St. Croix would have continued to prosper in the way that it did. As a result, many of the loans and mortgages which were issued in the 1760s came to be administered by a number of Irish individuals at St. Croix who had strong commercial connections with London, Copenhagen, St. Croix and Amsterdam. While in the 1750s, Nicholas Tuite helped members of his community to purchase land at the island, in the 1770s his grandson was responsible for the liquidation of insolvent estates.

### The Militia

Other roles played by Irish settlers at St. Croix included those in the local militia and their participation is evidence of this group's new found status as equal members of Danish society. Having been liberated from their own curtailed situation at Montserrat, their defence of St. Croix ensured that the slave population there remained controlled by local planting interests. Indeed, a slave uprising at the island in December 1759 greatly alarmed the white population there. In a letter to a correspondent in Ireland, Fr. Dominic Allen described the 'vast apprehension' of the European residents 'it must have proved fatal to all those of our colour as we are scarce in the proportion of one to fifty.'<sup>64</sup> The uprising was short-lived however and the militia soon apprehended the rebellious slaves. Once in custody, a large number of the slaves were publicly executed. Some were burned alive on a pyre or were 'broken on the wheel with an iron crowbar.' Others were put alive into gibbets and left to die.<sup>65</sup> This demonstrates their willingness to defend the dominions of a Lutheran King.

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<sup>62</sup> Nicholas Tuite Selby's brother, Charles Selby, served an apprenticeship with Mr. William Chippendale of Copenhagen, a business associate of his grandfather Nicholas Tuite, see Will of Nicholas Tuite, TNA, PROB 11/983 [Image Reference: 64]

<sup>63</sup> Den vestnikiske gældsløskommision St. Croix, 1779-1840 (681), '*Forhandlingsprotokoll*' Series: 46.1.1. Folder: Sessionsprotokol for agenterne ved ter Borchske lån, fo. 14.

<sup>64</sup> Fenning, 'The mission to St. Croix in the West Indies', p. 87.

<sup>65</sup> Waldemar Westergaard, 'Account of the Negro rebellion on St. Croix, Danish West Indies, 1759', *The Journal of Negro History*, 11(1926), pp. 50-61, p. 58.

## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

By all accounts, Irish Catholics at the British Leeward Islands were willing and able to defend their property and their island against external and internal attack. It was their unwillingness to take the Oath of Abjuration however that denied them the opportunity of ever being considered as full members of British society. At the British islands, Catholics had no objections to taking an oath of allegiance to the King. What they did object to was the Oath of Supremacy.<sup>66</sup> This was not a problem at St. Croix, and once individuals had sworn allegiance to the King of Denmark, they were granted Burgher status. With that, it became their responsibility to become involved in the promotion and protection of the society within which they wished to live. In contrast to the British West Indies, where they were prohibited from owning or carrying arms, at the Danish Islands, 'all white men capable of carrying arms...' were expected to muster with 'a good musket, a carton box with 16 sharp cartridges in the least, a sword, cutlass or scimitar...' In fact, failing to present with said equipment was to incur a fine of 30 pieces of eight. Regardless of religion, Irish Catholics were considered as equals under Danish law and many of them became active members of the militia.<sup>67</sup>

A glance at the list of members of the militia, composed in the late 1750s, shows quite a large proportion of names usually associated with the Irish community at the British Leeward islands. For example, in the Christiansted Quarter, individuals such as Dominic Sullivan, Walter Power, Thomas Griffen, Roger Farrel, Francis Finn, James Killikelly and Thomas Moriarty filled the rank of infantrymen. In the Company Quarter, members of the infantry included Thomas Callenan, James Garvey, Edmond Kelly and Patrick Kelly. In the Queen's Quarter, infantrymen such as Henry Ryan, Laurence Bodkin, Patrick McDonagh, Patrick Lynch, James Bourke, John Power, Thomas Sullivan, William Beatty, John Kirwan and Hugh Sweeney filled the ranks. While Irish members of the militia served predominantly as infantrymen, a small number served as Captains, Lieutenants and Sergeants. For instance, Sergeant Patrick Lynch and second lieutenant William Barrett both served in the militia of the Company Quarter. In the King's Quarter, Captain Mathew Farrell and Sergeant Edward Staunton led the brigade. Meanwhile, Captain Hugh O'Donnell led the Princes Quarter Militia.<sup>68</sup> Burgher Captains, such as O'Donnell, were responsible for ensuring their unit was well turned out when attending any exercise or public event. In a memorandum to the Captains of 1758, Governor Baron Von Prock noted with distain that 'some [of the militia] will not

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<sup>66</sup> JBTP, Vol. 9, January 1750/51 to December 1753 (London, 1932), pp. 234-6.

<sup>67</sup> 'Instruction for Every Captain in this island...' 18 December 1758, DNA, Generaltoldkammeret – ældre del Vestindisk-guineisk renteskriverkontor, 1760-1770 (365), ' *Estatsråd Martfeldts samling over De danske vestindiske øer*', Series: 405, Folder: Martfeldts samling II, GTK 2B 49, no folio number.

<sup>68</sup> 'Members of the St. Croix militia, c. 1759,' Generaltoldkammeret-ældre del Vestindisk-guineisk renteskriverkontor, 1690 – 1767 (365), ' *Om Vestindien*', Series: 411, no folio number.



## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

be ashamed to come with long trousers and the worst coats they are owners of...'<sup>69</sup> Over and above cosmetic concerns, Captains were expected to hold militia exercises at least once every six weeks. If a burgher failed to attend, he would be fined 30 pieces of eight as a donation to the island's Hospital.

While non-participation in the island's militia warranted a fine, little could be done about those who refused to support a Catholic mission at the island. Tuite's original ambition, was to establish St. Croix as a haven for Catholics. It appears however, that he was one of the few individuals prepared to fund it. Throughout the War, as the plantations began to yield ever increasing amounts of valuable sugar, Tuite's brethren concerned themselves more with profit than with prayer. Speaking of this phenomenon, Fr. Hyacinth Kennedy remarked to a correspondent in Europe, 'For Sir, here riches is their full object and they lose sight of anything else almost, and those who were pious and observant when they leave Europe, here in less than a year they forget all and are all their own directors...'<sup>70</sup>

Although there were profits to be made at St. Croix, Tuite was aware that not everyone could afford to make payments towards the maintenance of the parish. In one case, Mr. Allen, an Irish priest who had agreed to serve the community at St. Croix, made an agreement that he was to receive one thousand pieces of eight per annum in cash in order to sustain himself at the island. His flock reneged on the agreement however, and Mr. Allen's allowance was paid to him in sugar and rum.<sup>71</sup> Because voluntary contributions were low, Tuite financed the initial construction of the Catholic church at Christiansted in 1755. He then continued to finance the mission on behalf of the entire community, believing that when the others were in a position to contribute, they would do so.

By 1760 however, the structure had not been completed and the building was in need of repair: 'there's a large church tiled but in no way finished in the inner parts, without altar or pulpit...' Accordingly, Tuite made a further investment and purchased church silverware to the value of over two hundred pounds sterling.<sup>72</sup> As the congregation began to prosper, there was little to suggest that Tuite's fellow Catholics were prepared to pay for the upkeep of a parish priest or a church. One reason for this was the trend towards the celebration of mass at private houses. A well-established tradition at

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<sup>69</sup> 'Instruction for Every Captain in this island,' 18 December 1758, DNA, Generaltoldkammeret – ældre del Vestindisk-guineisk renteskrivertor, 1760-1770 (365), '*Estatsråd Martfeldts samling over De danske vestindiske øer*', Series: 405, Folder: Martfeldts samling II, GTK 2B 49, no folio number.

<sup>70</sup> Hyacinth Kennedy, St. Croix to Charles O'Kelly, Rome, 20 September 1760, in Fenning, 'The mission to St. Croix', p. 93.

<sup>71</sup> Hyacinth Kennedy, St. Croix to Charles O'Kelly, Rome 20 August 1760, in Fenning, 'The mission to St. Croix', p. 87.

<sup>72</sup> Hyacinth Kennedy, St. Croix to Charles O'Kelly, Rome 20 August 1760, in Fenning, 'The mission to St. Croix', p. 86-9.

## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

Montserrat, where it had been a practice born out of necessity, at St. Croix it soon became associated with those belonging to the higher social orders. Indeed, several planters engaged their own private priest to tend to their own estates. As a result of this, less affluent Catholics, who were 'either hindered or ashamed to intrude on private houses' were often not catered for.<sup>73</sup> Fr. Devenish took a dim view of the domestic Eucharist, and also of the priests who celebrated these masses. In all, he believed that certain priests, instead of expanding and tending to the entire Catholic community at Montserrat or St. Croix, thought more of 'enriching themselves' through such practices.<sup>74</sup>

Later, in 1765, Devenish, who was full of religious zeal on his arrival to the island, wrote of his plans for the congregation:

'Considering the riches of their particulars, their profusion in luxury and the great liberty we have by the king's indulgence for the free exercise of our religion, I thought it time to transport upon these motives the administration of the holy sacrament of baptism from a lady's bedchamber to a humble place of divine worship, the holy sacrifice of the Mass from the tables of drunkenness and chambers hung with naked Venuses and sea-nymphs bathing in Chrystal springs, to alters whose poverty emblemed sobriety...'<sup>75</sup>

In the late 1760s, six merchant-planters of the local community approached Fr. Devenish with a view to purchasing an eighty acre site from Lawrence Bodkin. The site was intended to be for the use and financial upkeep of the Catholic clergy who planned to cultivate it. Showing an interest in the idea, Mathias Farrill provided security for the transaction. Within a short period of time however, the arrangement collapsed. At the time, a local priest remarked that 'I had great reason to think that their intention was not firm from the beginning...'<sup>76</sup> Fr. Devenish was eventually frustrated by his attempts to change the ways of his flock and the once enthusiastic priest left the island for Grenada, where he was 'very well received.'<sup>77</sup>

Tuite soon grew tired of the uncooperative attitude of his community and in 1769 he stated that he would never encourage another priest to come to St. Croix. Despite having secured religious toleration at the island, his fellow Catholics did not appear interested in

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<sup>73</sup> Thomas Devenish, Puerto Rico to Charles O'Kelly, Rome 30 April 1765, in Fenning, 'The mission to St. Croix', p. 116.

<sup>74</sup> Thomas Devenish, Grenada to Charles O'Kelly, Rome 26 April 1763, in Fenning, 'The mission to St. Croix', p. 111.

<sup>75</sup> Thomas Devenish, Puerto Rico to Charles O'Kelly, Rome 30 April 1765, in Fenning, 'The mission to St. Croix', p. 116.

<sup>76</sup> Terence MacDonell, St. Croix to Charles O'Kelly, Rome, 16 June 1769, Fenning, 'The mission to St. Croix', p. 118.

<sup>77</sup> Terence MacDonell, St. Croix to Charles O'Kelly, Rome, 16 June 1769, Fenning, 'The mission to St. Croix', pp. 118-9.

## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

the promotion of their religion there. Despite their new found wealth, Tuite's Catholic associates were simply not prepared to finance the establishment of a functioning parish. Declaring publicly that he found his Catholic compatriots at St. Croix 'so indifferent in the promotion of their religion in a strange and mixed country'; Tuite charged the community for the monies he had invested in the construction of the church and also requested that he be compensated for the fourteen years of financial support that he conferred on the clergy. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Tuite never recouped his money.<sup>78</sup>

Fr. Terence MacDonnell appears to have been relatively well received at St. Croix and he possessed a weary understanding of the planters' world view. Writing in 1769, he remarked that:

'I am afraid that they will never join in any public good. They are unhappily disunited. No community of any persuasion half so much. They are divided into parties and factions. All the clergy that ever they had here never could reconcile them. Their disorder is so old and violent that it would require I believe no less than Peter or Paul to cure them of it...'<sup>79</sup>

Although Crucian society was tolerant towards those of a Catholic faith, the island was never to become the haven for Catholics that Tuite envisaged. Ultimately, the objective for most planters was to return to Europe once their plantations had been established.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, some planters simply returned to Montserrat.<sup>81</sup> As a result, perhaps it is no surprise that those who could afford to contribute to the upkeep of a Catholic mission chose not to do so. In contrast to Montserrat, the Irish merchant-planter society at St. Croix proved a transient one.

With this in mind, two wills of particular interest are those belonging to Theobald Bourke and Lawrence Bodkin as these gentlemen gravitated towards Copenhagen after the war. Neither Bodkin nor Bourke made any charitable donations to the poor of St. Croix or Copenhagen, nor did they bequeath money to the various churches at either location. No mention of Ireland was made by either but despite this, both appear to have been concerned with providing for their families. In this way, Bodkin bequeathed a large fortune to two of his nephews. Alluding to the fortune he established through the slave trade, Bodkin left his nephew Edward Cullen one thousand and seven hundred

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<sup>78</sup> Terence MacDonnell, St. Croix to Charles O'Kelly, Rome, 16 June 1769, Fenning, 'The mission to St. Croix', p. 121.

<sup>79</sup> Terence MacDonnell, St. Croix to Charles O'Kelly, Rome, 16 June 1769, Fenning, 'The mission to St. Croix', p. 120.

<sup>80</sup> This was certainly the case for John Baker, see for example, LJB, John Baker, St. Kitts to an unnamed friend, 15 March 1750/51, fo. 29.

<sup>81</sup> Patrick Browne to Carl Linnaeus, 24 May 1765, The Linnean Society, Correspondence of Charles Linnaeus, L3588.2.200-201.

## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

rixdollars. His other nephew William Bourke was given one thousand two hundred rixdollars. However, either nephew could request that the sum be 'laid out in Negroes' for their own personal use.<sup>82</sup>

Like Lawrence Bodkin, Theobald Bourke retired to Copenhagen in his later years. Although he made no reference to his servants or to his slaves, he made detailed instructions in his will to provide for his wife Jane, and his two sons Richard and Edmund.<sup>83</sup> A monetary value was not expressed in the will. Instead Bourke divided his estate into shares and outlined how many shares each family member was to receive, along with the divisions of shares which was to take place should one family member predecease another. Bourke then stipulated that the inheritance allocated to his granddaughters, Ann and Brigit Farrell, would be withheld should they 'marry without the consent of their guardians.'<sup>84</sup>

Bodkin also bequeathed his estate to his heirs on the strict condition that they marry appropriately. In a will which was more specific than Bourke's, Bodkin left each of his daughters, Catherine and Ann, fifty thousand rixdollars once they reached twenty one. Until that time, for the purpose of their education and maintenance, they were to each receive an annual sum of one hundred pounds sterling until they reached fourteen. After that, they could each expect two hundred pounds sterling per annum until they reached the age of twenty one. If either of them married without consent however, they would be stripped of their inheritance. A slightly different arrangement was made for his son Dominic who was to receive similar sums to those of his sisters. When he reached eighteen however, his father set aside an annual sum of five hundred pounds for his use and maintenance 'until his being of competent age to take possession of our Estate.'<sup>85</sup>

While both Bodkin and Bourke opted to settle in Copenhagen, Nicholas Tuite and John Kirwan chose to remain in London. Both were two merchant-planters who made significant fortunes from their activities at St. Croix. Primarily merchants, they used the profits they had garnered at the Danish island to fund their other commercial activities in

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<sup>82</sup> Will of Lawrence Bodkin, confirmed: 22 August 1763, proved: 2 February 1797, TNA, PROB 11/1288 [Image 358]

<sup>83</sup> Edmund Bourke was a Danish diplomat who was born at St. Croix on 2 November 1761. Edmund inherited a considerable fortune from his father and eventually played a significant role as a Danish diplomat. He was made *Chargé d'Affaires* at an early age and from 1790 to 1792 he was Danish envoy to Poland and a recipient of the honorary title of *Den Hvide Orn*. In 1792 he was Danish envoy to Nepal, in 1797 he was envoy to Stockholm and in 1801 he was envoy to Spain. Out of appreciation of his work, he was made Chamberlain to the King in 1793 and received the honour of the *Storkors of Danebrog* in 1811. Said to have been a superb intellectual and conversationalist, he was possessed with a razor wit, tremendous powers of observation and a thorough appreciation of human nature see, Brika, *Dansk Biografisk Lexikon*, ii, pp. 552-3.

<sup>84</sup> Will of Theobald Bourke, confirmed: 22 April 1783, proved: 30 December 1783, TNA, PROB 11/111 [Image 26]

<sup>85</sup> Will of Lawrence Bodkin, confirmed: 22 August 1763, proved: 2 February 1797, TNA, PROB 11/1288 [Image 358]

## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

Europe. Good friends and business partners, Tuite and Kirwan both operated out of Lime Street in London throughout the mid-eighteenth century and were both involved in the areas of finance, brokerage and conveyancing. So close were they that Kirwan named one of his six sons, Nicholas Tuite Kirwan. In his will, Kirwan outlined the extent of his estate which consisted of 'of my estates and my plantations, sugar works, lands... and all my Negroes and Slaves in the several English, Danish, French and other West India Islands.' The remainder of his estate was located in Epsom in Surrey. With this, he was in a position to provide handsomely for each of his seven children, their cumulative inheritance amounting to over forty thousand pounds sterling.

Tuite's children and grandchildren were also well provided for, albeit less generously. In spite of his wealth, Tuite did not believe in showering his relatives with easy money. In his will, Tuite's daughters Eleanor, Ann and Winifred were said to have already received their dowries when they married. Accordingly, they were only entitled to a sum of two hundred pounds per annum. Meanwhile, Eleanor's son Charles Selby, who was in partnership with William Chippendale of Copenhagen, was to receive three thousand pounds to invest in his business. Tuite stipulated that 'my intention is not to give it to him but to lend it him', as a result, Charles was to repay his inheritance to the estate at five per cent per annum. The substantial remainder of Tuite's estate went to his son Robert.<sup>86</sup> Although it is unclear how much his father left to Robert, it was estimated by the esteemed Baron Bernstorff to be in the region of forty thousand crowns per annum. In a letter of 15 February 1777, the Baron noted with surprise that Robert had applied to become a Chamberlain to the King as this was most unusual for an individual who was not Danish by birth. In spite of this, Tuite produced his family pedigree which showed that his father and he were in fact descendents of the ancient Danish *de Thott* family. Such putative lineage, along with an impeccable fortune, seems to have secured his title.<sup>87</sup>

Although John Kirwan benefited greatly from his involvement in the Crucian sugar industry, he did not intend that any of his fortune would return to the island after his death. While Kirwan bequeathed ten pounds to the 'poor of St. Oliver under Heath', he refrained from donating to any church. This was not the case with Tuite who donated large sums to charitable causes. In spite of his dispute with his fellow Catholic settlers at St. Croix, Tuite gave forty pieces of eight to the Catholic Church there. By giving the same amount to the Danish Church, Tuite was perhaps displaying the indifference he

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<sup>86</sup> Will of Nicholas Tuite, confirmed: 5 February 1772, proved: 27 November 1772, TNA, PROB 11/983 [Image Reference: 64]

<sup>87</sup> Aage Friis, *Bernstorfferne og Danmark: Bidrag til den Danske stats politiske og kulturelle udviklingshistorie 1750-1835* (2 Vols., Copenhagen, 1903-19), i, pp. 512-3.

## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

now felt towards the promotion of his own church at the island. To the poor at Montserrat, Tuite gave one hundred pounds sterling and in doing so revealed his enduring connection to that island.

It was fashionable for gentlemen to set aside some money with which their closest friends could purchase mourning rings. As a result, Kirwan left his friend Charles Collins twenty guineas for such a ring. Meanwhile his son Clement Kirwan and Nicholas Tuite's grandson, Nicholas Tuite Selby, were each given one hundred pounds to purchase more ornate rings.<sup>88</sup> Nicholas Tuite himself appears to have been disinterested in such matters. Instead, he made arrangements to give ten pounds per annum to 'Brigit or Biddy Reilly' a dwarf who lived near Granard in Co. Westmeath. This sum was to be paid through his associates, John Nugent of Mullingar and Francis French of Dublin and was to be continued for the duration of Biddy's lifetime. Tuite also appears to have felt a duty of care towards his relatives Ann McNamara and Mary Cahill of Cork. While he was alive, he paid them an annuity of thirty pounds per annum and in his will, he requested that these payments be continued.

Tuite, like Kirwan, was also in possession of a range of personal effects. To his wife Anne, Tuite bequeathed 'all her apparel...' together with his watch, rings, jewels, coach and 'any four of my horses she shall chuse...' In addition, his wife was also given any silver, linen or furniture belonging to his several houses in England, along with his collection of 'fine wines, Rum, Brandy, Beer, Ale, Cyder and all other spirituuous Liquors'. Without specifying, Tuite wished that his wife have a share in "...any part or parts of my estate real or personal which are in the Dominions of the Kings of England or Denmark or any other kingdom or country whatsoever..."<sup>89</sup> John Kirwan also possessed a similar array of items which he left in its entirety to his son Clement. In doing so, he stipulated that Clement pay the rent and adhere to the conditions of the lease under which he held his household and premises in Lime Street, London. Clement was also to receive his father's extensive collection of prints, printers and printed books, along with all plate, linen, china and household goods.<sup>90</sup>

Despite the apparent wealth they had accrued from their involvement at the island, Tuite, Bodkin, Kirwan and Bourke appear to have had little personal connection with St. Croix at the time of their deaths. Aside from Tuite, none of them made any contribution to the Catholic Church or to the poor members of the community there. Conversely,

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<sup>88</sup> Clement Kirwan and Nicholas Tuite Selby were executors of John Kirwan's will, Will of John Kirwan, confirmed: no date, proved: 24 April 1799, TNA, PROB 11/1322, [image reference: 238]

<sup>89</sup> Will of Nicholas Tuite, confirmed: 5 February 1772, proved: 27 November 1772, TNA, PROB 11/983 [Image Reference: 64]

<sup>90</sup> Will of John Kirwan, confirmed: no date, proved: 24 April 1799, TNA, PROB 11/1322, [image reference: 238]

## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

those of more modest means seem to have been more attached to St. Croix and many of them were keen to leave sums of money, however small, to a good cause there. One such individual was Andrew Lynch from Co. Galway. In his will of March 1764, he bequeathed twenty five pounds to the poor of the parish of Tuam in Co. Galway, five hundred pieces of eight to the Catholic Church at St. Croix, and ten pieces of eight to the Danish church there. He was also keen to leave a sum of money to his friends, Andrew McDermott and James Carroll, so they could purchase mourning suits. The remainder of his estate was left to the children of his relative Michael Lynch 'who live poorly' at Montserrat. Finally, he wished to be buried 'at the plantation of Francis Surloin, where my brother Stephan Lynch is buried.'<sup>91</sup> As a result of this will, we can appreciate the extent to which Lynch was personally connected to Tuam, Montserrat and St. Croix. His wish to be buried beside his brother in a plantation at the Danish island is a poignant one and suggests that his experience as a migrant to St. Croix was entirely different to that of the affluent merchant-planter.

Because cotton plantations required a minimum investment, they were particularly suited to settlers of modest means. One such settler was William Beatty who maintained a reasonable standard of living at the island. Not wishing to single out any one church at St. Croix, Beatty left ten rixdollars to each of the Danish Church, the English Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Dutch Reformed Church. He also bequeathed ten rixdollars to the hospital there. His mother Christina Beatty, and sisters Francis and Margaret, all received three hundred pounds. Meanwhile, his mother was charged with ensuring that the rest of his estate went to the Sullivan family in the parish of Killeshandra in Co. Cavan.<sup>92</sup> It is not clear whether Beatty's mother was residing on St. Croix at this time. Nonetheless, it is certain that her son retained a connection with Ireland and that he was keen to share with them the wealth that he had earned from his years at the Danish colony.

David Irwin was another settler who managed to accrue a moderate fortune at St. Croix. Unlike the above testators, Irwin did not leave any money to his church or to the poor. Instead, Irwin chose to make provisions for his family in Ireland and Antigua. First however, he wished that his two friends at St. Croix, Jooen Meel and William Beatty be given one hundred pounds each, twelve months after his death. The rest was to be divided among his family. David Irwin, his father, resided in Co. Cavan and was to receive fifty pounds sterling. Meanwhile, his brothers William of Co. Leitrim, and James

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<sup>91</sup> Will of Andrew Lynch, Planter, St. Croix, composed: 12 March 1764, proved: 12 July 1765, Danske Kancelli (232), '*Vestindiske Sager 1746 – 1771*', Series: D-36, fo. 393, # 22.

<sup>92</sup> Will of William Beatty, Cotton Planter, St. Croix, composed: 7 January 1767, proved: 7 August 1767, Danske Kancelli 232, '*Vestindiske Sager 1746 – 1771*', Series: D-36, fo. 553, #20.

## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

of Antigua were bequeathed two thousand and one thousand pounds respectively.<sup>93</sup> In this way, David Irwin's estate benefited individuals in at St. Croix, in Ireland and at the British island of Antigua.

John Dillon was an individual who died in far poorer circumstances than Irwin, Beatty or Lynch. It is unclear what he did for a living at St. Croix, neither does his will indicate how he came to reside at the island. Moreover, the fact that he left his mark, in lieu of signing his name, would suggest that he was not an educated man. Having very little to bequeath to anyone, Dillon set aside five rixdollars apiece for both Danish and Catholic Churches at St. Croix. His only other wish was that the remainder of his estate be left to his brother Cain in Bettinogen, Co. Antrim.<sup>94</sup> Even though Dillon did not possess much, his will reflects a recurrent theme. Those who migrated to the West Indies directly from Ireland maintained strong connections with that country.

In general terms, it is difficult to quantify the cultural influence of the Irish community at St. Croix during this period. Similarly, gauging the impact of the Irish West Indian community on Ireland is also problematic. Despite this, the fortunes which resulted from the Irish sugar, slave, linen and provisioning trades sustained three Harp festivals in Granard, Co. Longford which were organised to 'encourage the national Music of Ireland...' Financed by the Copenhagen merchant John Dungan,<sup>95</sup> the festivals took place in 1784, 1785 and 1786 and were very well-received. Dungan, who was a man of means, described his frustration to his friends:

'It is to be lamented...that persons placed in high situations, and who have it in their power to do the most good by their rank or wealth for their own country are, I am sorry to hear, the least disposed to do it – I will not attempt to say whether by habit or inclination.'<sup>96</sup>

Given Tuite's enthusiastic promotion of citizenship and community at St. Croix, it is quite possible that he eventually came to share the sentiment expressed by Dungan. Tuite secured freedom for Catholics to openly practice their religion at St. Croix and his influence and assistance meant that many Irish settlers migrated to that island. The society he envisaged however was not to be. Based on the principles of free trade,

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<sup>93</sup> Will of David Irwin, St. Croix, Danske Kancelli (232), ' *Vestindiske Sager 1746 – 1771*', Series: D-36, fo. 389, # 20.

<sup>94</sup> Will of John Dillon, St. Croix, composed: 11 September 1768, proved: 5 January 1770, Danske Kancelli (232), ' *Vestindiske Sager 1746 – 1771*', Series: D-36, fo. 553, #1.

<sup>95</sup> Dungan was one of the Irish agents of the Ter Borchske Loan at St. Croix see, Den vestinkiske gældslukvidationskommission St. Croix, 1779-1840 (681), ' *Forhandlingsprotokoll*', Series: 46.1.1. Folder: Sessionsprotokol for agenterne ved ter Borchske lån.

<sup>96</sup> Diarmaid Ó Catháin, 'Féilte Cláirseoireachta Ghránaird, John Dungan, Cóbánhávan, agus an Rómánsachas Luath' in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 22(2007), pp. 106-32, p. 107.



## The success of Nicholas Tuite's Catholic haven

Tuite's Catholic haven was sustained by unrestricted access to a range of commercial opportunities. This ensured that settlers at St. Croix could continue to invest and develop their holdings independently of the Crown. As we saw in Chapter Two, from the perspective of the Quadripartite Concern, an indebted plantation could never be a source of true profit. Allied to this sense of economic independence was the concept of citizenship and Tuite was keen for his Irish associates to become full members of Danish society. By doing so, this group became equal members of the local community. As a result, several members held positions that would have been unthinkable at the British Leeward islands. Some held public office, practiced the law and were involved in the militia.

As the post-war slump emerged however, the Danish State endeavoured to reaffirm its control over the revenue of its West Indian colonies. The result of this was that trade at St. Croix became increasingly restricted and alternative sources of income were sought to sustain the planting industry. With this, Tuite's dream of creating an economically independent haven for his Irish brethren ended as waves of Dutch credit flooded the island's coffers. Planters continued to expand their holdings but many became deeply indebted first to the Dutch banks and subsequently, to the Danish Crown. Aside from this, the participation of Irish settlers within the local community was thwarted by persistent in-fighting and divisions.

Indeed, there is little evidence of positive citizenship in a number of the wills pertaining to those who benefited most from this Irish social experiment. Unlike several of the poorer members of the Irish community at St. Croix, merchant-planters such as Lawrence Bodkin, John Kirwan and Theobald Bourke did not donate to charitable causes at the island. Overall, it appears that they did not consider St. Croix to be a permanent place of residence. Conversely, the individuals who migrated from Ireland in order to work on their plantations were prepared to remain. In doing so they provided a destination for a larger wave of Irish settlers in the later eighteenth century.

## Conclusion

The presence of an affluent Irish West Indian community at St. Croix has long been recognised within the literature relating to the British West Indies.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, a number of historians of the Danish Empire have noted that this group migrated to St. Croix from the British West Indies.<sup>2</sup> However, little research has been conducted into the nature of this Irish West Indian community, either at the British or the Danish West Indies. Overall, the role of this group in the development of St. Croix, together with its related activities within the wider Atlantic world, has not been addressed. Accordingly, this thesis has sought to redress three principal problems that appear to have limited research in this area.

First, it addressed the apparent absence of an affluent Irish Catholic community at the British Leeward Islands in the eighteenth century. Despite the evidence that showed the activities of this West Indian community at the Danish islands, there was little evidence of them at the British islands. By approaching the historical sources from an alternative perspective, I have shown that they were in fact an influential and prosperous community, particularly at Montserrat. As we have seen, this was reflected in the ways in which they educated their children in continental Europe and also invested in commercial enterprise beyond the British Empire.

The second obstacle to research in this area appears to have been the languages in which sources relating to this area were collected. My research has shown that a good knowledge of French, together with a working knowledge of Danish, allowed me to locate and assess the primary documentation used in this study. In addition, given that the principal subjects of this thesis were English-speakers, I regularly found relevant, English language material relating to them in the Danish repositories. While I found it difficult to decipher the gothic script in which the eighteenth century Danish records were collected, it was not impossible. Although some sources proved more challenging than others, I found the port records to be the most accessible and the most relevant to this study. The ability to understand the secondary literature relating to Denmark and its colonies was also a challenge. However, following an intensive course in the language, I eventually found it possible to read these sources.

From my perspective, the third difficulty was a conceptual one. By considering this subject from the confines of empire, I found it difficult to bring together the various

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<sup>1</sup> See Yorke, *Diary of John Baker*, p. 62 and Fenning, 'The mission to St. Croix', pp. 75-122

<sup>2</sup> See for example, Christensen, 'Kolonisamfundet på St. Croix', p. 94.

## Conclusion

strands of evidence relating to this topic. In this thesis, I have shown that by adopting an Atlantic perspective, it is possible to define the ways in which the Irish Catholic merchant community operated within and between the European empires. By identifying this area of research, I have shown how imperial structures have heretofore dominated this subject area and, on occasion, have served to stifle research. For instance, if the records we use have been generated by a single empire or sphere of influence, then it is only natural that these records will perpetuate the notion that this sphere of influence should be firmly positioned at the centre of the narrative. As a result, this study has shown the importance of using a range of sources that relate to a number of spheres of influence.

Indeed, the activities of the Irish merchants and the network which sustained them can be perceived as a sphere of influence in its own right. By revealing the presence of this Irish mercantile community in the West Indies, I have described their impact on the development of the Crucian sugar industry. In addition, by considering Denmark and its West Indian colonies from the perspective of the Irish merchant community, I have revealed an alternative way of considering the island of St. Croix and its role within the wider Atlantic region. As we have seen, St. Croix was an entrepôt throughout the Seven Years' War. It was also home to an international group of merchants, traders, planters, artisans, labourers and sailors. As a result, it cannot be considered in isolation from the conditions and forces that shaped those who interacted with it.

By assessing a range of sources with the horizontal perspectives of connectivity, as opposed to the vertical perspective of empire, we can reveal Atlantic connections that have otherwise remained unnoticed.<sup>3</sup> For instance, I have shown how linen that was produced in Irish towns such as Granard can be linked to consumers in Spanish Puerto Rico. Similarly, we can follow the salted beef and butter produced in Cork as it travelled to the sugar producers of the French West Indies. Although this trade was conducted by neutral subjects of Denmark, I have shown how these individuals were Irish in origin and maintained connections with their Irish mercantile network and with Ireland. Accordingly, this thesis has shown how Irish individuals engaged with the Atlantic world economy by planting and trading commodities such as linens, salted provisions and other manufactures. I have also shown how this group organised and financed an efficient and lucrative trade in African slaves. As a result, they ensured that their sugar plantations were self-financing, highly profitable and economically independent of the metropole.

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<sup>3</sup> This approach is discussed by Bernard Bailyn, 'Reflections on some major themes', in Bernard Bailyn and Patricia Denault, eds., *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent structures and intellectual currents, 1500-1830* (London, 2009), pp. 1-43, p. 2.

## Conclusion

As we saw in Chapter One, Irish Catholics at the British Leeward Islands were more affluent, influential and actively engaged in the Atlantic world economy than has been previously thought. Due to the Penal Code, they tended not to purchase property nor were they permitted to openly practice their religion. In addition, they could not hold public office or take part in the legal profession. Despite this, Irish Catholic merchants accumulated capital through their participation in international and inter-island trade. This chapter shows the adaptability of this group as they developed strategies to conceal their wealth and religious affiliation from the authorities. Their ability to do this was determined by their participation in transatlantic commercial networks that were built on ethnic and kinship ties. Finally, this chapter examines how, by the late 1740s, the elevated status of this Irish mercantile group was becoming increasingly tenuous. As a result, they began to seek investment opportunities beyond the British Empire.

Chapter Two discussed Tuite's interest in the Danish West Indies. As a merchant and a planter, he was keenly aware of the potential of St. Croix and encouraged a number of his Irish associates to invest with him. His vision was to provide an economically secure location for Irish settlers, where they could also practice their religion without discrimination. As a result, Tuite encouraged over two hundred Irish settlers to St. Croix both from the British islands and from Ireland. Tuite's strategy for the development of the island was a simple one and his aim was to ensure that his plantations were debt-free and self-financing within a few years of purchase. This allowed his associates to be economically independent of the Danish Crown and to invest their resulting profits as they saw fit. As we have seen, this was made possible by the administrative instability at St. Croix which prevailed when the island was transferred from Company rule to Crown control. The fact that this period coincided with the Seven Years' War proved fortunate for these Irish merchant-planters and Tuite and his associates took advantage of the commercial opportunities created by war time conditions at the island.

Chapter Three elaborated on the role that Tuite played as an intermediary between the Danish and the British authorities. While on the one hand, this proved Tuite's value to the Danish Crown, on the other hand, it also revealed the way in which Tuite conducted his Crucian enterprise from London. Accordingly, the importance of his role as co-ordinator of invisible services for his associates at St. Croix, and in Europe, cannot be understated. This chapter explored Tuite's ability to advise diplomats with the same finesse that he employed in his negotiations with privateers. An excellent communicator, Tuite's commercial network was an extensive one. This chapter described the journey he took with John Baker and reveals the extent of his northern European connections.

## Conclusion

Moreover, it showed how his audience with King Frederick V signified Tuite's elevated status within the inner sanctum of Danish commercial enterprise.

In Chapter Four, I discussed the nature of the Irish sugar, slave and commodities trade at St. Croix. By consulting a wide range of sources, I established the patterns of trade that were associated with both the legal Danish sugar trade and the illicit sugar trade with French Saint Domingue. The importation of low-cost, high-quality Irish and British linens and manufactures allowed the residents at St. Croix to maximise their commercial transactions with the French colonists. As this chapter has shown, the threat of privateers and the Royal Navy, meant that these transactions were frequently conducted at the neutral Spanish port of Monte Cristi. Once these manufactures were exchanged for French plantation produce, this chapter examined how it was consigned to the Northern European ports of Hamburg or Amsterdam. The proceeds from the sale of these goods were often remitted, via bills of exchange, to agents in London such as Nicholas Tuite or John Kirwan. These agents credited the planters' accounts with this money which was then used either to purchase a further cargo of hardware items for St. Croix, or to fit out a slaving vessel for Africa. In this chapter, I have also shown how Lawrence Bodkin became one of the primary importers of slaves at St. Croix during this time. This business could not have been financed without the returns from the illegal sugar trade. Through the use of this system, individual merchant-planters and those involved in the wholesaling business, were in a position to maintain a steady stock of goods to supply the population of St. Croix, and also to take part in local trans-imperial trade. In this way, I showed how illicit trade assisted the initial development of St. Croix and promoted the ideal of the self-financing plantation. This was important, because a plantation that could sustain its own development was one that was truly profitable. In addition, it was one that was truly independent of the metropole.

Through the use of sources from the British Admiralty, together with the port books from Christiansted, I explained some of the patterns of trade that prevailed at the island. In doing so, I described the intended journeys of two Danish vessels, each of which were owned by Irish merchant-planters who were involved in the French contraband trade. Overall, the *Saint Croix* and the *Adventure* show the complex nature of the intra-imperial sugar and slave trades and the extent to which Imperial regulation was simply ignored, evaded or exploited, depending on the circumstances that prevailed at any given time.

Finally, in Chapter Five I examined the success of Nicholas Tuite's 'Catholic haven'. By the end of the war, there were over a dozen Irish merchant-planters and some two hundred and fifty Irish settlers who were artisans, labourers or traders. Through the use

## Conclusion

of Beck's map of 1766, I described the post-war status of several Irish merchant-planters who remained at the island. I then discussed the ways in which the Irish group contributed to the overall community at St. Croix. Unlike at the British Leeward Islands, these colonists practiced their religion openly, held public office and were members of the local militia. However, the economic independence secured by Nicholas Tuite for his Irish associates at St. Croix was eroded by the increasing restrictions on trade that were imposed in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War. In the absence of access to international trade, many merchant-planters were forced to secure loans from Dutch banks. Although production continued, many became heavily indebted to the Dutch Republic and eventually, to the Danish Crown. As a result, the dynamic merchant-planters who had helped to develop the sugar industry during the war became solely focused on sugar planting. In turn, they also became dependent on the Danish Crown.

By the mid-1760s, the sense of community and citizenship as advocated by Tuite was not shared by some members of the Irish merchant-planter community. Indeed, few were prepared to finance the upkeep of the local Catholic Church. As this chapter shows, the affluent members of the Irish merchant-planter community do not appear to have considered St. Croix as a permanent place of residence. Many returned to Montserrat, migrated to another frontier island or made their homes in Copenhagen or London. Conversely however, less affluent Irish settlers, many of whom migrated directly from Ireland, were more likely to make St. Croix their home.

We have seen how the interactions of Irish merchants at St. Croix were both local and international. Due to its geographical location, its inhabitants engaged with the residents of the neighbouring Dutch, French, British and Spanish islands. In addition, traders from North America and Europe regularly called at St. Croix with a view to exchanging goods. With the exchange of goods however, came the exchange of information and ideas. Personal and commercial relationships were sustained over long-distances and, as we saw in Chapter Four, allowed for great efficiencies in the intra-imperial commerce that characterised the island's economy during this period.

Overall, my research has been guided by the idea that, despite Danish, British and French efforts to limit their respective West Indian trades, trans-imperial commerce carried on regardless. Although a series of statutes defining the boundaries of colonial trade were issued throughout the Seven Years' War, such legislation was only adhered to when it suited the planters, local merchants and their metropolitan agents.<sup>4</sup> As an entrepôt that sustained the contraband trades of other empires, I have shown that the commercial systems that encompassed St. Croix were decentralised in nature. Indeed, I

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<sup>4</sup> This is a major theme explored by Hancock see, David Hancock, *Oceans of wine: Madeira and the emergence of American trade and taste* (London, 2009), pp. xvi-xvii.

## Conclusion

have argued that merchants such as Lawrence Bodkin relied on information and services that were provided by individuals in multiple locations and political jurisdictions.

Access to multi-lateral information and services that related to such things as commodities, markets, surpluses, shortages, freight, weather and rates of exchange allowed merchants like Bodkin to formulate strategies that would allow him to engage with suppliers and customers in the most efficient and profitable way possible. In this way, although the conditions within which he operated were influenced by imperial policy, Bodkin used his own judgement to choose his markets. In this way, I have shown how the agency of individual merchants served as the foundation upon which the Atlantic world system was based.<sup>5</sup>

Conversely, I have shown that, in order to profit from ever-changing Atlantic markets, a merchant could not operate alone. Collaboration was the foundation to any successful business, particularly one that was conducted across a wide geographical area. In this way, we have seen how it was imperative to cultivate long-distance, personal relationships with a view to exchanging reliable information and other forms of support and assistance.<sup>6</sup> These relationships were frequently based on kinship and ethnic ties and they fostered a sense of community. However, these were not purely altruistic arrangements. Merchants advanced their own social and economic status through mutual assistance and reciprocity.

In this way, it is evident that market information in itself was relatively useless if its reliability could not be verified. This was an obstacle that any transatlantic commercial network sought to address. For a network to be successful, its members needed to consider each other as trustworthy individuals. In this way, my study has shown the way in which networks of kin and ethnicity served as the foundations upon which the Irish commercial network functioned. The bonds made in early life were the most enduring. Accordingly, in Chapter One I described how Bodkin, Ryan and Tuite all came from St. Patrick's parish at Montserrat where they appear to have fostered lasting personal relationships.

Indeed, extended family relationships were also important elements of the Irish mercantile network. By marrying Henry Ryan's sister Mary, John Baker was accepted into the powerful Irish Catholic community at the West Indies. As a result, we saw how he subsequently became a business associate of Bodkin, Tuite and Ryan as they purchased plantations at St. Croix. By describing this, I showed the role of these

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<sup>5</sup> This phenomenon has been recognised by Hancock see, David Hancock, 'Self-organized complexity and the emergence of an Atlantic market economy, 1651-1815: The case of Madeira', in P. Coclanis, ed., *The Atlantic economy during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (Charleston, S.C., 2005), pp. 30-71, p. 31.

<sup>6</sup> Steele, *The English Atlantic*, pp. 213-5.

## Conclusion

individuals within the partnership. Although each benefited from this arrangement, their individual skills were directed towards the benefit of the group. While Ryan ensured that the plantations were managed efficiently, Bodkin took care of local trade at the island. Meanwhile, Baker became the group's legal advisor as Tuite managed the international dimension of the trade.

Overall however, I described how Tuite was the instigator of the entire operation and how his strategy acknowledged the importance of each element within the group. This enterprise could only be as strong as its constituent parts. As a result, international difficulties never superseded local concerns. In order to ensure that the business ran effectively, I showed how Tuite delegated responsibility. By doing so, he created his own decentralised, trans-imperial system that was organised by the skilled individuals who were selected from his network of personal connections.

Indeed, this study has shown that this group were highly skilled and educated individuals. As I described in Chapter One, a classical education and knowledge of French allowed an individual to be perceived as a gentleman. It also allowed this group to adapt to any situation or culture. A solid education of this kind allowed merchants to gain an air of respectability and authority. This was made clear in Chapter Two, when I described the way in which Nicholas Tuite petitioned King Frederick V and the Pope in 1754 and also in the way that he approached the diplomatic representatives of both Britain and Denmark.

It was important for the Irish mercantile community at St. Croix to maintain this air of respectability. As I described in Chapter Four, the charade of commercial legitimacy could only be sustained by their engagement in the legitimate Danish sugar trade. This branch of the sugar trade ensured that they paid their Crown dues. More importantly, it allowed them to maintain contact with the powerful shipping magnates who controlled the Danish colonial trade. With them on their side, the Irish merchants enjoyed an elevated status within the Danish Empire and, as a result, had access to even further commercial opportunities. I described this enviable position when I outlined Nicholas Tuite's audience with Frederick V in 1760 and his later meetings with Danish merchants and financiers such as Reinhart Iselin, Conrad Fabritius and J. F. Weever.

Overall, an outward appearance of respectability was important if a merchant wished to be involved in any kind of trade. In the case of Bodkin, Tuite and Kirwan, their ability to secure commercial credit or to use bills of exchange would have been severely undermined had they attracted the wrong kind of attention. As we saw in Chapter Three, when merchants used bills of exchange they used their reputations to secure lines of credit. Thus, for the sake of his business and for the success of his commercial network,



## Conclusion

it was essential that a merchant strive to maintain an air of respectability and trustworthiness. This was likely to have helped the Irish commercial network to engage extensively in illicit commerce. In Chapter Four, I described the way in which Nicholas Tuite gained the trust and friendship of the colonial officials whose job it was to monitor and prevent illegal trade at St. Croix. By lending them money and assisting them to engage in planting at the island, Tuite ensured that his interests in the illicit sugar trade would be protected.

This thesis has shown how individuals like Nicholas Tuite were instrumental in shaping the contours of the Atlantic world economy. Unbounded by Imperial regulations he adapted to the conditions created by the Seven Years' War. In doing so, his commercial activities fluidly evolved to take advantage of opportunities as they arose. In spite of imperial regulations, he drew on the support of his far-flung networks in order to exploit commercial opportunities.

Throughout this thesis, I have described Nicholas Tuite as an individual who was deeply engaged in the areas of planting, local trading and trans-imperial commerce. In his early twenties, Tuite managed a sugar plantation of one hundred acres at Montserrat. At a later stage, during the Austrian war of succession, he was involved in the supply of Irish provisions to French colonies through the use of Dutch ships. As a result, it is no surprise that he thrived in the commercial conditions that prevailed at St. Croix during the Seven Years' War. As I have shown, Tuite was a shrewd businessman and conducted his enterprise with efficiency. Tuite chose his associates with care and only selected individuals whose particular skills could contribute to the benefit of the group. In addition, I have shown how all aspects of this enterprise were important and how he appreciated the role of the local associate just as much as he did the role of the international correspondent.

My research suggests that Tuite was an excellent communicator. This is evident in the way in which he served as an intermediary and a negotiator, both within and between the British and the Danish Atlantic worlds. In order to be a good negotiator however, it was crucial that he have the ability to view the world from the perspective of others and to understand the factors that motivated them. As we saw in Chapter Two, he presented his vision for a 'Catholic haven' to Frederick V. This was in the knowledge that the King desperately required the assistance of a merchant-planter of Tuite's status and experience. As a result, Tuite knew that the King would be prepared to entertain his requests.

Tuite differed in some respects to the other Irish merchant-planters at St. Croix. Indeed, I would argue that his will reflects a worldview that was at odds with theirs. As

## Conclusion

we saw in Chapter Five, several of the Irish merchant-planters bequeathed sums of money to their families alone. Having made their fortunes at St. Croix, some returned to Copenhagen where their participation in Atlantic commerce, or in the Irish mercantile network, declined. As a result, by the time of their deaths, their world view had narrowed and their estates were divided between individuals who resided within the Danish Empire.

This was not the case with Tuite who bequeathed money to his family in London and also remembered the poor of Montserrat and St. Croix. In addition, he set aside funds for the widows of two of his deceased associates in Ireland and also for 'a dwarf living near Granard' by the name of Biddy Reilly. I would argue that the geographically dispersed nature of his bequest reflects Tuite's enduring attachment to his personal and commercial network. Tuite acknowledged individuals who were not directly associated with the international character of his commercial network. This suggests that he continued to perceive the success of his network as determined by those who sustained it, whether they were trans-national merchants or local flax spinners. In his will, Tuite displayed an awareness of the way in which his success was due to the character of his network, which was at once local, transatlantic, commercial and personal.

In conclusion, it is my opinion that although several studies have outlined the ways in which Ireland contributed to the Atlantic economy during the early modern period, the evidence relating to this trade continues to be viewed through the lens of the British Empire and its restrictive Navigation Acts.<sup>7</sup> By considering the Irish Atlantic from other perspectives, it is possible to obtain a greater richness in the narratives that relate to this subject. Although this study deals with Irish merchants, I have considered their role within the Danish Atlantic. This has allowed me to examine this group beyond the confines of empire. In this way, I have shown how individuals who appear to be Irish, or British, or West Indian, traded as neutral subjects of Denmark, both in Ireland, and elsewhere. In this way, when we consider the early modern Irish Atlantic world, I believe that we should attempt to consider the multiple systems that worked in parallel with one another. By doing this, we can appreciate the points at which these systems overlapped, creating the conditions that influenced the role of Ireland, its people and its products within the Atlantic world economy.

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<sup>7</sup> See for example, R. C. Nash, 'Irish Atlantic trade in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 42(1985), pp. 329-56.

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