SECTION 4
Shifting Encounters

The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports in the Northeastern Caribbean

Continuity and Change

Han Jordaán and Victor Wilson

Introduction

The focus of this article are the Dutch colony of St. Eustatius (Statia), the Danish colony of St. Thomas and the Swedish colony of St. Barthélemy, during the close of the so-called “long eighteenth century.” These colonies shared the distinction of being free ports. The last two decades of the eighteenth century were a tumultuous time on both sides of the Atlantic, and, in the case of free ports, a time of both economic success as well as misfortune and ruin. Free ports thrived – albeit under great risk – on the fringes of empires in conflict, offering neutral, intercolonial transit stations during times when regular ports on critical trade routes were obstructed or blockaded.

The Dutch Republic managed to remain neutral during most of the eighteenth century, but this neutrality ended abruptly with the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780–1784). One of the causes of the war was the Dutch stance in the War of American Independence (1775–1783). St. Eustatius, which fulfilled a crucial role in providing the Americans with goods, arms, and ammunition was a first target for British military action. After a devastating British occupation in 1781, which ended when allied French forces retook the island that same year, the Statian merchants and planters rebuilt their position and returned to business as usual. But in 1793, the Dutch again became involved in armed conflict when revolutionary France declared war on Great Britain and the Dutch Republic. Two years later, French troops invaded the Dutch Republic. The Stadtholder fled to England and the Batavian Republic was proclaimed, which became a vassal state of France. That very same year, St. Eustatius was occupied by “friendly” French forces sent from Guadeloupe – an occupation which would spell the definitive end to its role as a free port in the region. By the beginning of 1795, Statia had lost its unique position as a free port in the region. Its role was taken over by St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy. Danish St. Thomas had had a long history of free trade beginning in the early decades of the eighteenth century, while the new Swedish colony of St. Barthélemy had declared its port open to all nations in 1784. The economic development of these two colonies, which managed to remain neutral during the last decade of the

eighteenth century, benefited greatly from the downfall of Statia and the other assorted international conflicts around the turn of the century.

These colonies have, for a number of reasons, not been researched extensively from either a regional or Atlantic perspective. Little or no attention has been made to connections across imperial borders in the colonies themselves, either in the form of migration flows, the transfer of ideas and information, or the complex networks created through trade and commerce. It follows that the relationship between the different free ports of the Caribbean and the surrounding colonies in the region is not very clearly understood.

This chapter will elaborate on David Armitage's concept of "cis-Atlantic" history, in the sense of being a regional history within an Atlantic context. More specifically, it will study three places within the Caribbean region with a similar institution – the free port city – and their inhabitants. The focus will be mainly on the transfer of ideas, commercial networks and migration. Firstly, it is argued that the experience of Dutch transit trade informed and influenced Danish and Swedish colonial policy to a considerable extent. Secondly, it is argued that the commercial networks were operated similarly and had contacts in all three free ports, due to their proximity to each other as well as to the existing regional systems of trade. Also, it is argued that their similar roles during the end of the eighteenth century gave rise to competition and affected contemporary discussions on trade policies in both colony and metropole. Lastly, it is argued that the occupation of the Dutch colonies gave rise to migration flows that deeply affected the development of St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy well into the nineteenth century, and that migration from colonies such as Statia ensured a continuity of trade in the region.

The Historical Background of St. Eustatius, St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy

The island of St. Eustatius was occupied by the Dutch in 1636. This was not done by the Dutch West India Company (WIC), but by an expedition financed by a number of Zeeland merchants who had obtained official permission for this enterprise from both the Zeeland chamber and the Board of Directors of the Company. Statia became a so-called *patroonschap*, a privately administered colony within the jurisdiction of the WIC. The island was uninhabited at the time of the Dutch arrival and was initially baptized New Zeeland. It was intended to become an plantation colony and the first settlers cultivated tobacco. But in 1683 the last heir of the original *patroons* sold his share to the WIC and St. Eustatius came under the direct government of the Company,

which recognized the island's potential to become a regional center for illicit trade.¹ During the wars of the second half of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century in which the Dutch Republic was involved, Statia was recurrently seized and plundered by the French and the English.²

After the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War Statia was returned to the Dutch. The WIC resumed control but in 1791 this organization went bankrupt and was dissolved. The administration of the colonies then returned to the States General. In 1795, after the Batavian Republic was proclaimed, all three Dutch Windward islands³ were placed under French "protection" by Commissioner Victor Hugues at Guadeloupe. Between 1801 and 1802 and again from 1810 until 1816 the British were in control again.⁴

The Scandinavian kingdoms were comparatively late entrants in the scramble for colonies in the Caribbean. The first Danish occupation of St. Thomas occurred in 1671, followed decades later by the colonization of neighboring St. John in 1717. With the purchase of St. Croix from the French in 1733, the Danish Caribbean empire was completed. The same year as the Danes gained a foothold on St. Thomas, the Danish West India Company was established both as a commercial and an administrative entity for the island. Reorganized as the Danish West India and Guinea Company in 1680, the Company assumed administration of all the colonies in the Caribbean as well as the Danish enclaves on the Gold Coast until it was dissolved in 1754. While early Danish dominion over their islands was questioned and challenged from the first day of their colonization by other European powers, the islands remained in Danish hands, except for two British occupations in the early nineteenth century, one in 1801–1802 and the other 1807–1815. The islands were finally sold a century later to the United States, in 1917.⁵

The first successful Swedish claim for a colonial territory in the region came at a much later date than did the Danish acquisitions in the Caribbean. While the ambition to establish colonies certainly was not lacking among members of the Swedish government, the practical outcomes of such projects during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were limited. The seventeenth century

1 G.J. van Grol, *De grondpolitiek in het West-Indisch domein, I, Algemeen historische inleiding*, 3 vols., (Amsterdam: S. Emmering, 1934), 1:46–48, 56.

2 Wim Klooster, *Illicit Riches: Dutch trade in the Caribbean, 1648–1795* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1998), 89.

3 The islands in the Northeastern Caribbean which are called "Leeward" in English are termed "Bovenwinds" or "Windward" in Dutch.

4 Van Grol, *Grondpolitiek*, 1:65–68.

5 Neville A.T. Hall, *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies: St. Thomas, St. John & St. Croix* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 6–7; Svend-Erik Green-Pedersen and P.C. Willemoes Jørgensen, "Dansk kolonihistorie – det globale perspektiv," in *Dansk kolonihistorie: Indføring og studier*, ed. Peter Hoxcer Jensen et al (Aarhus: Forlaget Historia, 1983), 9–15.

New Sweden settlement in Delaware rapidly fell into the hands of Dutch colonists. Sweden also made attempts to trade on the African Coast but could not keep a foothold there either, as they were unable to compete with larger powers. The eighteenth century was marked by Swedish territorial losses around the Baltic Sea, effectively ending the preceding period of imperial expansion. The same century also saw some more or less serious attempts at colonial acquisition. The culmination of diplomatic negotiations with France during and after the American War of Independence would yield the only tangible result of these ambitions. In addition to a treaty that stipulated French subsidies to the Swedish crown, the French ceded the small Caribbean island of St. Barthélemy in exchange for staple rights in Gothenburg. The Swedish rule of St. Barthélemy was interrupted by a British occupation in 1801–1802, during the same period as the Danish islands.⁶

The islands of St. Eustatius, St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy had, at the close of the eighteenth century, developed into small polyglot communities which were centered on trade in shoreline urban settlements. These maritime societies were composed of a variety of different ethnic groups, religions and languages. At the time of the British capture of Statia in 1781, the majority of the white population was male: adult males outnumbered adult females three to one, with 668 men (75 percent) versus 215 women (25 percent). Of 163 persons, 20 percent of the adult white male population, it is known that they settled in the colony only within half a year prior to the arrival of the British. Over 60 percent of these newly arrived burghers came from Europe, mainly from England, Ireland and Scotland, but also from France, and Italian and German territories. The remaining 40 percent came from other, mainly British, colonies, especially from Bermuda and North America. There was only a small core of long-term residents; the majority of the white population consisted of recent migrants, predominantly unmarried white males of British descent, who had come to the island to participate in trade and probably hoping to make a fortune on the “Golden Rock,” as Statia was known.⁷

On St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy, foreigners were of central importance as well. The local administrative elite, the colonial officials, civil servants, clergy

6 Sture M. Waller, “Det svenska förvärvet av St Barthélemy. Huvuddragen av de svensk-franska förhandlingarna,” *Historisk tidskrift*, 3 (1953): 231–255; Sten Carlsson, *Svensk historia 2: tiden efter 1718* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1980), 177; Elisabeth Mansén, *Sveriges historia 1721–1830* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 2011), 79–84.

7 Norman Barka, “Citizens of St. Eustatius, 1781,” in *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of Expansion*, ed. Robert L. Paquette and Stanley L. Engerman (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 223–238, 230, 232, 234–236.

and soldiers consisted of Danes and Swedes. The cadres of planters, merchants, artisans and workers were, as a rule, mainly foreigners. During the initial phase of Danish settlement in St. Thomas, attempts at colonization using indentured farmers and peasants failed. Instead, the only recourse was a more permissive policy to ensure colonization and development. Between the years 1685–1693, the island was leased to the Prussian Brandenburger Company in order to revitalize the colony.⁸ A large share of the Company actors were of Dutch origin, and when the Company ceased its operations, the Dutch were the most prominent group and would remain so for the rest of the eighteenth century. By the time of the first documented censuses in St. Thomas in 1686 and 1688, the Dutch comprised a significant portion of the population. In 1686, they numbered 37 out of a total of 135 white adults, and in 1688 they totalled 66 out of a total of 148.⁹ The Dutch cultural and commercial dominance on St. Thomas and St. John is illustrated by other indicators as well. The Dutch Reformed Church became firmly established in the Danish colonies and a majority of the slaves spoke a Dutch Creole.¹⁰ The system of open admission continued after the purchase of St. Croix in 1733. The island's topography was suitable for plantation agriculture in a way that neither St. Thomas or St. John were. To attract planter knowledge and expertise, Danish officials offered cheap lots of land, generous loans and a tax-free status to planters from nearby islands from 1735 and onwards. Migrants came from Antigua, St. Kitts, and Virgin Gorda, and even from islands as far away as Barbados. The English comprised the most numerous and influential cohort of colonists at the beginning of Danish development of St. Croix. A number of Dutch settlers also arrived from St. Eustatius, who under the leadership of Governor Pieter Heyliger, sought refuge in St. Croix during the War of Jenkins' Ear in 1739. In this way, the English language and culture became dominant on St. Croix whereas the Dutch dominated St. Thomas and St. John.¹¹

8 Hall, *Slave Society*, 6–7.

9 Valdemar Westergaard, *The Danish West Indies under Company Rule 1671–1754* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1917), 121; J.O. Bro-Jørgensen, *Dansk Vestindien indtil 1755: kolonisation og kompanistyre* (København: Fremad, 1966), 170–171.

10 For the correspondence of the authorities of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Dutch Republic with the local churches in the three Danish islands, see Amsterdam Municipal Archives (hereafter SAA), 379 (Archive of the Classis Amsterdam of the Dutch Reformed Church), inv. nos. 227–228. Online inventory: <https://stadsarchief.amsterdam.nl/archieven/archiefbank/inventaris/379.nl.html> (2014).

11 Hall, *Slave Society*, 9–13; Jens Vibaek, *Dansk Vestindien 1755–1848: Vestindiens storhetstid* (København: Fremad, 1966), 55–62.

In the case of St. Barthélemy after Swedish acquisition, colonization by Swedes was not even seriously considered. At the time of the transition from French to Swedish governance, a local population of 700 French farmer settlers and their slaves were already using most of the land on the island for subsistence farming. Small quantities of cotton were a locally-produced staple, but there was nothing that generated incomes on par with regional slave plantation economies. In 1786, Swedish ownership of the new colony had become common knowledge on both sides of the Baltic Sea. Facing famine as a result of crop failures that had stricken the Baltic countries during the preceding years, farmers and tenants within the Finnish provinces petitioned to move to the king's new colony in the Americas, where it was said one could make a fortune easily. Faced with this plea, King Gustav III thought it best to dispel any false rumors that the colony was a bountiful land of opportunity. Instead, measures were adopted that were aimed to attract merchants and capital from the surrounding islands, to make the most out of an acquisition of questionable value.¹²

Ideology of the Free Ports

The economic history of the six islands of the Dutch Antilles – from their colonization during the seventeenth century until 1795 – constitutes a conspicuous counterpoint to that of the British and French Caribbean. Because of their limited size, and unsuitability for large-scale agriculture, different strategies had to be employed in order to create profitable colonies out of the Dutch islands.¹³ Very much the same case can be made for the Scandinavian islands in the region, with the only exception being St. Croix, which became a full-fledged plantation colony. Also, as will be argued in this section, the administration of St. Barthélemy and St. Thomas were influenced to a significant extent by Dutch practice in the region.

The colonial system was, in a strict sense, built on mercantilist principles which held that colonial markets were only within the exclusive trading rights of the home country. Shipping to and from the colonies was barred to foreign

12 Birger Wedberg, "S. Barthélemy-febern," in *Tärningskast om liv och död. Rättshistoriska skisser* (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt & Söner, 1935), 51–62; Pekka Masonen, "Kustavilainen siirtomaapolitiikka ja Saint-Barthélemyyn kuume," *Historiallinen aikakauskirja* 3 (2007): 330–345.

13 P.C. Emmer, "‘Jesus Christ was Good, but Trade Was Better’ An Overview of the Transit Trade of the Dutch Antilles, 1634–1795," in *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion*, ed. Robert L. Paquette and Stanley L. Engerman, 450–475.

vessels. These regulations became the object of discussion and criticism, both in the metropolises and in the colonies, especially after the publication in 1776 of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, which led to serious questioning of mercantilist policies. During times of crisis and conflict, regular supplies from the metropole to the colonies simply could not be sustained, and the recurrent wars between Great Britain and France closed regular traffic which was the lifeline of plantation colonies. The colonies needed continual provisions, victuals and slaves, without which they would be sure to suffer losses and possibly face food crises and famine. The establishment of free ports was one solution that facilitated shipping between traders of all nationalities. The system had its beginnings in the fourteenth-century Mediterranean port cities and was later implemented in various localities on the other side of the Atlantic. The Dutch were one of the progenitors of the system in the Caribbean. They conducted this trade with the Spanish colonies through Willemstad on Curaçao, and with the French, the English and the Americans through St. Eustatius.¹⁴

On St. Eustatius tobacco was soon replaced by sugar cane. However, it already became clear in the 1660s that the island was far more valuable as a market for illicit trade with the surrounding English and French colonies. Until the beginning of the eighteenth century, however, economic success was severely hampered by the recurrent wars and foreign occupations. In the 1720s, the economic situation improved and, thanks to the fact that the Dutch Republic managed to remain neutral during most European conflicts, the economic situation improved up until the 1780s. While nearly all the other European nations were at war – between 1739 when the War of Jenkins' Ear broke out and 1763, when the Seven Years' War came to an end, a whole series of armed conflicts was fought by the major colonial powers both in Europe and the Americas – the Statian position as a neutral entrepôt gained importance. The colonies of the belligerents, when cut off from regular connections with the home country, obtained supplies from neutral Statia, which were paid for with tropical produce. By the 1750s, the island had become a principal regional market, where European goods, African slaves, and American colonial produce were exchanged.¹⁵ Ships of all nations were allowed to trade on the island. But although ships from foreign European ports were admitted, the traffic with the Dutch Republic was exclusively reserved for Dutch Ships. After the outbreak of the American War of Independence, Statia's role as an Atlantic trading hub reached its zenith and the island became a major supplier for the rebellious North Americans. The Statian heyday ended abruptly with the British occupation of 1781. After the de facto French occupation between 1795 and 1801

14 Klooster, *Illicit Riches*, 91–94.

15 Ibid., 89–92.

and the two British occupations that followed during the early nineteenth century, the role of St. Eustatius as an Atlantic entrepôt definitely came to an end. The loss of Dutch neutrality in European conflicts and the waning mercantilist doctrine were, as will be explained later, the principal reasons why.

The Danish plan for a free port was an idea born out of necessity. Up until the year 1754 the Danish colonies had been controlled by the Danish West India Company, which, by the end of its administration, struggled against local planter interests and uneven profits. Indeed, difficulties arising from supplying the colonies and the planters' needs resulted in limited free trade concessions as early as 1707. Shipping rights in the colonies were liberally extended, insofar as colonial shipowners were permitted to export locally produced staples to any foreign port. Danish home ports, including Hamburg and Bremen, were forbidden destinations. In principle, this entailed that the Danish colonies became a Caribbean free trade zone from 1724 to 1745. Company attempts at reasserting its monopoly after that period failed, and the colonies were declared the property of the crown after the dissolution of the Company. Under crown rule, free trade was reinstated for both St. Thomas and St. John, which was finalized by a royal decree in 1764, which held that St. Thomas and St. John were open to ships bearing flags of all nations. Danish colonial goods would, however, be reserved exclusively for Danish keels. Meanwhile, St. Croix remained closed to foreign traffic, the important exceptions being slave vessels and the victuals and necessities that were regularly supplied from North America. The 1764 decree was, in essence, a concession to St. Thomas and St. John, both of which had been marginalized by the burgeoning plantation economy of St. Croix. The fact that the commerce of St. Thomas floundered during peacetime was also acknowledged by this decision. It was thought that by establishing this economic dualism between the islands, the exception made to St. Thomas and St. John would compensate for their relative disadvantages.¹⁶

In Sweden, it was Gustav III's finance minister, Johan Liljencrantz, who was the leading proponent of free port and transit trade ideas. Liljencrantz is

16 Poul Erik Olsen, *Toldvaesendet i Dansk Vestindien 1672–1917* (København: Toldhistorisk Selskab, 1988), 33, 61, 147; Erik Gøbel, "Management of the Port of Saint Thomas, Danish West Indies, during the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *The Northern Mariner/Le Marin du Nord* 7, no. 4 (1997): 45–63; Erik Gøbel, "Volume and Structure of Danish Shipping to the Caribbean and Guinea, 1671–1838," *International Journal of Maritime History* 2, no. 2 (1990): 109–114; Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien 1755–1848*, 64, 81–83. The majority of free port traffic in the Danish colonies would gravitate towards St. Thomas instead of St. John, as Charlotte Amalie was preferable to Coral Bay in St. John as an anchorage.

usually accredited with the decision for the establishment of a free port on St. Barthélemy. A pragmatic mercantilist, Liljencrantz favored the idea of establishing Sweden as the middleman between Northern Europe and the markets outside of the Baltic. While the earlier Baltic experiments in free trade certainly played their role in the Swedish considerations regarding St. Barthélemy, local examples in the Caribbean were clearly studied. The first expedition and survey ship to the island carried with it two merchants, Jacob E. Röhl and A.F. Hansen. The former, upon return to Sweden in late 1785, penned a sobering report on the limited future use of the colony. The only prospect, according to Röhl, was through freedom of trade with neighboring colonies, especially the sugar-producing French colonies of Guadeloupe and Martinique. This would have to be accomplished either by formal trade rights or by smuggling. It is clear that he had conversed with Statians on the latter subject, as he related their methods of clandestine trade, and that the Dutch “understood to procure so-called indulgence for their swindles in the French Islands, although they must pay for it without exception.” Röhl referenced the Dutch system on St. Eustatius as a way of ensuring a “popular government.”¹⁷ The important fact about Röhl’s document is that it is striking in its similarity to the decrees issued on 31 October 1786, the same decrees that established the Swedish West India Company (SWIC) and created the first regulations for the colony’s administration. The Company was created as a joint stock venture with a limited charter, and awarded the right to trade with St. Barthélemy and other West Indian islands and North America for an initial period of fifteen years. Its privileged position in the form of lower duties and shares in the income of the colony did not, however, give the company exclusive trading rights. Any Swede or foreigner was allowed to carry on trade with St. Barthélemy, although with certain limitations.¹⁸

By this time, the decision to establish St. Barthélemy as a free port had already been made, and was officially proclaimed in 1785. The free port model practiced by the Dutch and Danish was seen as the only realistic alternative when the future of the colony was debated by the government. The process of applying a Swedish governing structure at the island was also influenced by actors already engaged in the transit trade of the Caribbean. In 1784 Henrich Wilmans,¹⁹ a Bremen merchant with 16 years of experience trading in both St. Eustatius and St. Thomas,

17 J.E. Röhl, *Wördsamt Memorial*, 14 January 1786, F16, Vitterhetsakademiens handskriftsamling, Antikvarisk-topografiska arkivet (ATA).

18 These decrees and others are published in J.B. Hattendorf, *Saint Barthélemy and the Swedish West India Company. A selection of printed documents, 1784–1814* (Delmar: Scholars’ facsimiles & reprints, 1994).

19 In all likelihood, identical with the merchant established in Statia by 1788, see below.

petitioned the Swedish king with suggestions about the possible utility of a new free port at St. Barthélemy. Wilmans detailed the legal and administrative institutions in existence on Statia, and was of the opinion that the Swedes would be wise to implement them in their new colony. He was also adamant that customs duties would have to be fixed at a consistently lower rate than on St. Thomas and St. Eustatius in order to succeed economically. This might seem a peculiar suggestion from Wilmans, who at the time was co-owner of a merchant house on St. Thomas. But he himself explained that another competitor in the region would “be attended with great benefit to us in St. Thomas, as the Danes must do the same to retain merchants among them.” The information and suggestions that Wilmans provided were subjects of great interest, and resulted in some visible adaptations in the 1786 decrees, among which was the institution of a mixed council of Swedish officials and local inhabitants.²⁰

With the acquisition of St. Barthélemy, Sweden also acquired the status of a slaving power, though on a limited scale. In principle the colony was a Swedish territory and in all respects under the rule of the Swedish law of 1734. At the same time, the emerging legal structure of the fledgling colony came to adopt a mixed legal system incorporating previous French laws and West Indian customs, much in the same way as they were in Dutch and Danish colonies. In other words, Swedish administration of the newly acquired colony was quite firmly anchored in local and regional conditions, and the Dutch example of St. Eustatius was a clear reference point.²¹

The Islands' Merchant and Mariner Communities: Composition, Networks, Operations

The Statian community of merchants and mariners consisted of a minority of members of local families, some of whom had already lived on the island for several generations, and an international group of Dutch and numerous

20 Wilmans received a gold medal from the Swedish king as a token of gratitude, but then was not allowed to begin construction of a planned house in Le Carénage on St. Barthélemy as he had expressly wished for. P.M. of Henrich Wilmans, dated 18 October 1784, Henrich Wilmans – Creutz, 24 May 1785, both in SBS 1A, SNA; Ingegerd Hildebrand, *Den svenska kolonin St Barthélemy och Västindiska kompaniet fram till 1796* (Lund: Smålandspostens boktryckeri, 1951) 87–93.

21 Fredrik Thomasson, “Contre la Loi mais en considérant les Circonstances dangereuses du moment.” The Swedish court of law on Saint Barthélemy around 1800,” (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Caribbean Historians, Curaçao, May 2012), 6–12.

foreign expatriates. A special group among these expatriate merchants and mariners was formed by Bermudians. One of its most prominent representatives, as we will see, was Richard Downing Jennings. Due to overcrowding, Bermudians quickly departed for other American destinations. Migrants from this British Atlantic colony settled in the mainland North American colonies, the Bahamas, St. Thomas, and St. Eustatius, operating trading networks of their own along kinship ties. There were also strong Bermudian-Dutch connections. The Statian family of Huguenot descent, Godet, with contacts in Guadeloupe, St. Barthélemy, Boston, and Amsterdam, was related to the Bermudian Gilbert family, which was part of an extensive Anglo-American network, and also to former governor and prominent Statian merchant Johannes de Graaff. In 1780, Bermudians made up the largest group of British colonial settlers in Statia, outnumbering all those from the Caribbean and North America combined.²²

In 1789 the population structure of the white inhabitants seems to have been more balanced than before the war, which might indicate that the number of “fortune seekers” relative to more stable settlers had diminished. There were 787 men aged 16 years or older versus 771 women. Boys and girls younger than 16 years numbered 374 and 409 respectively.²³ Governor Godin estimated in 1790 that about 1000 men, women and children depended directly on commerce for their livelihood, while some 300 earned a living as mariners or fishermen.²⁴ The international composition of the Statian community can be seen in two petitions dating from March 1787, which bore, respectively, the names of 68 and 116 inhabitants of various backgrounds, who had an interest in trade and shipping.²⁵ In a statement regarding Statian trade, issued in July of that same year by the aforementioned Bermudian Richard Downing Jennings and two other foreign merchants, it is mentioned that he represented 52 non-Dutch residents on the island.²⁶

The foreign community in 1790 consisted mainly of British, North American, and French merchants. According to Godin, there were two large British companies. These had many ships in service, and were mainly interested in the

22 Michael J. Jarvis, *In the Eye Of All Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians, and the Maritime Atlantic World, 1680–1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 4–5, 354–355.

23 National Archives of the Netherlands, The Hague (hereafter NL-HaNA), 1.05.01.02, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie (NWIC) inv. no. 1196, 628.

24 J. de Hullu, “St. Eustatius, St. Maarten en Saba op het laatst van de 18^{de} eeuw,” *West-Indische Gids* 1, no. 1 (1919): 385–393, 388.

25 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.02, NWIC inv. no. 1195, copy of a petition by 68 merchants to acting governor and councillors, received 14 March 1787, 423–425; copy of a petition signed by 116 merchants and ship captains, dated 15 March 1787, 435–438.

26 NL-HaNA, 2.21.006.49, Collection G.K. van Hogendorp (CVH), inv. no. 154g, copy of a document dated 20 July 1787, nos. 37–66v.

slave trade, and the trade in dyewood, mahogany, cotton, and rum – products that were more in demand on the British market. They maintained contact with all the British islands.²⁷ The seven to eight North American merchants mainly traded in wood, flour, and provisions – a trade that was subject to large fluctuations in volume and prices. According to Godin, these North American products were immensely important to the island, since it made Statia the cheapest supplier of provisions to the neighboring colonies.²⁸ There were two major French merchant houses which illegally imported tropical produce, especially sugar, from the French colonies, mainly from Guadeloupe. The French were the major suppliers of return shipments to the Dutch Republic, either directly by shipments to Dutch correspondents, or indirectly by selling tropical produce to Dutch merchants in Statia who then shipped it to the home country.²⁹

Some foreign merchants also originated from European countries that did not have direct colonial connections with the Americas. Jean Henri Fabry for example, partner of the merchant house and shipowners of Fabry & Sugnin, and Samuel Chollet and his cousin Louis Chollet, all originated from Switzerland.³⁰ The merchant and ship-owner Joseph Frankina was a Sicilian.³¹ Philip David was a merchant from Prague.³² The trader Friedrich Nicolas Sander originated from Eppendorf, a town near Hamburg.³³ Fredrich Wilhelm

27 De Hullu, "St. Eustatius," 389–390.

28 Ibid., 390.

29 Ibid.

30 Fabry probably later returned to Switzerland where he continued his business. In the archive of the kanton of Vaud a fragment of his bookkeeping is kept over the period 1792–1798, which partly concerns the period of his stay in St. Eustatius. See: <http://www.davel.vd.ch/detail.aspx?ID=34109> (2013). For Samuel and Louis Chollet, see: NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, Oud archief van St. Eustatius tot 1828 (OASE), inv. no. 123, procuration 15 January 1782, 38r–39r; petition by Samuel Chollet regarding a French prize ship which he bought in 1782, 29 January 1782, 89r–89v, 90r–90v; inv. no. 130, Procuration from Fredrick Sugin, on behalf of Samuel Chollet, dated 6 February 1789, for Juan Baptista Oijarzabal in Santo Domingo, to claim a ship, 114r–118v. Chollet was born in Moudon, in the kanton of Bern.

31 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 123, deed of transport for the schooner *Elizabeth*, sold by Joseph Frankina to Henry Duncan and Vincent Deubeda, 12 June 1782, 469r; deed of transport for the schooner *Polly* (renamed *Elizabeth*), sold by Ebenezer Barker to Joseph Frankina, 5 December 1782, 701v–702r; inv. no. 130, last will and testament of Joseph Frankina, 14 March 1789, 193r–198v.

32 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 128, procuration dated 27 March 1787 from Philip David for Abraham Hartog, Jewish merchant established in Amsterdam, to act as his attorney regarding the inheritance from his uncle, Joost Hartog, who died in Altona near Hamburg, 164r–165r.

33 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 129, procuration, dated 7 April 1788, from Fredrich Nicolas Sander, merchant on St. Eustatius, for Barthold Möller, to act on his behalf regarding the settlement of the left estate of his parents, 253r–254v.

Cruwell, partner of the merchant house of Wildrik & Cruwell, came from the German town of Bielefeld.³⁴ Jan Ernst Kobert, partner of the merchant house of Kobert & Co, had direct trading connections with Hamburg and was probably also of German descent.³⁵

Creole whites, stemming from families that had lived in the colony for generations, like the Doncker, Godet, Groebe, Heijliger, Roda, and Runnels families, formed a minority among the white population. They usually also owned plantations and other real estate, trade not being their only economic activity. Statia counted several sugar plantations. Some of these families also owned plantations on St. Martin and on the Danish islands.

Company officials, in some cases locally-born, were also privately involved in commerce. Johannes de Graaff, who was born on St. Eustatius and was governor at the time of the surrender to the British in February 1781, remained active in trade during the 1780s and 1790s.³⁶ Members of the Beaujon family held high posts in the colonial administrations of St. Eustatius, Curaçao, and Demerara. They established a merchant house on St. Eustatius in 1780, which was later moved to Curaçao.³⁷ Other Company employees active in trade privately were Alexander le Jeune, Hendrik Pandt and Pieter Ouckama, although they were not amongst the most prominent merchants.³⁸ In 1790,

34 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 129, procuration, dated 29 April 1788, from Fredrich Wilhelm Cruwell for the merchant house of Jacob Henrich Weber & Son in Bielefeld, to act as his attorney regarding any inheritances from people in or near Bielefeld to which he was entitled, 297r–298r.

35 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 128, Procuracy from Jan Ernst Kobert for Erdwein Henrich Bartels, to make an arrangement with his creditors in Hamburg, both privately and on behalf of Kobert & Co, 30 July 1787, 557r–558r; inv. no. 129, Procuracy of Jan Ernst Kobert for Fredrich Wilhelm Cruwell, merchant on St. Eustatius, to establish current affairs with Dethlefsen & Limprecht on St. Thomas, attorneys of Kobert's creditors, the merchant house of Scramm & Kerstens in Hamburg.

36 De Graaff is mentioned as an exporter of tropical produce in several cargo lists. See for instance: NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 125, cargo list of the ship *Hildegonda Jacoba*, 18 May 1784, fol. 425r–426r; inv. no. 126, cargo list of the ship *Hildegonda Jacoba*, 17 May 1785, fol. 423r–424r; cargo lists of the ships *Vriendschap*, *Jongvrouw Anna Catharina*, and *Meijsje Cornelia*, 7, 19, and 31 July 1786 respectively, fols. 466r–467r, 502r–503r, and 544r–545r; inv. no. 138, cargolist of the ship *Noord Holland*, 24 June 1789, fol. 282r–282r; inv. no. 139, cargo list of the ship *Eensgezindheid*, 31 July 1790, fols. 436r–437r.

37 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 550, financial administration and correspondence of the merchant house of Anthonij Beaujon and Sons, established on St. Eustatius and Curaçao, 1780–1787.

38 Alexander le Jeune exported mainly tobacco and some coffee. He acted as correspondent for the merchant houses of Hanedoes & Van Hanswijk, Zadok & Salomons, and F.W. Holthuijsen, see NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. nos. 126 and 135, cargo lists dated 17 May

Governor Godin borrowed a large sum of money to invest in his private trade.³⁹ He sent several shipments of sugar, tobacco and coffee to Amsterdam in 1790.⁴⁰ He possibly also had an interest in the regional slave trade. A schooner named after him, which was owned by James & Lambert Blair, undertook three voyages to Berbice in 1790, carrying over 200 slaves to this colony.⁴¹

A last group to be mentioned was formed by expatriate correspondents of merchant houses established in the Dutch Republic. These might be individual merchants that had come to St. Eustatius on their own initiative and usually traded with a number of firms in the Dutch Republic. Or they might be sent to the island to represent a Dutch company overseas. This could be the case with family firms or family networks of merchants. The merchants Matthijs Kerkhoff, Jacob van Putten, David Mendes, and Jan Schimmel Hendriksz, all of whom acted as correspondents for what appear to be relatives in the Dutch Republic, although these contacts were never exclusive.⁴² Many of these merchants had also been active before 1781.⁴³

1785, 16 and 22 May 1786, and 31 July 1786; Only on one occasion did Ouckema export a quantity of coffee to J.A. Johanson & Joh. Joosten, see OASE inv. no. 125, cargo list dated 18 May 1784; Hendrik Pandt was active as a merchant between 1785 and 1788, exporting tobacco, coffee, sugar, cotton, hides and a quantity of elephant tusks. He acted as correspondent for prominent merchants like Louis Charles Boswell, Crommelin & Sons, and Hodshon & Son. See OASE inv. nos. 126, 135–138, cargo lists dated 23 April and 13 September 1785; 22 February, 16 May, and 4 September 1786; 16 and 26 May 1788; 24 June 1789.

39 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 131, a loan of f20,000 against an interest of 4 percent per annum, augustus 1790, 507r–508r. He borrowed this sum from Wendelina Eleonora ten Hooven, de widow of Jan Carel Godin.

40 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. nos. 139, cargo lists of the ships *Columbia* and *Eensgezindheid*, 30 March, 31 July, and 9 November 1790, fols. 113r–114r, 436r–437r, and 598r–599r.

41 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 139, cargo lists of the schooner *Governor Godin*, dated 25 May, 10 November, and 22 December 1790, fols. 250r–v, 600r–v, and 692r–v.

42 See for instance: NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 125, cargo lists of the ships *Jonghe Juffrouw Margaretha* and *Nooitgedagt*, fols. 195v and 254r–v; inv. no. 135, cargo list of the ship *Amsterdam*, 21 June 1786, no. 187, fols. 422r–423r; inv. no. 138, cargo list of the ship *Thomas*, 21 August 1789, fol. 489r–v; cargo list of the ship *De Hoop*, 13 February 1790, fols. 57r–58r; inv. no. 141, cargo list of the ship *Catharina & Elizabeth*, 31 July 1792, fols. 478r–479r. Matthijs Kerkhoff exported to the merchant house of Jan & Pieter Kerkhoff; Jan Schimmel Hendriksz exported to Rittenberg & Schimmel and to Hendrik Schimmel sr.; Jacob van Putten exported to Joannes van Putten; David Mendes exported to the Mendes Brothers.

43 Victor Enthoven, “That abominable nest of pirates: St. Eustatius and the North Americans, 1680–1780,” in *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 10, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 239–301, 296–297, appendix I. Merchants and shipowners, 1750s.

From the Statian governmental archives, especially the secretarial and notarial deeds, a good impression can be obtained of regional activities and relations. Some of the merchant houses were active on the neighboring islands. Fabry & Sugnin were for some time established in St. Thomas, before they came to St. Eustatius.⁴⁴ The Dane Lauretz Harleff Haasum had already been active on St. Eustatius before the British occupation of 1781. Together with his business partner Matthi Pieter Ernst, a merchant in Copenhagen, he operated under the name Haasum & Ernst. The Frenchman Pieter Renardel de Lavalette, who traded with Guadeloupe and Saint-Domingue, later became a third partner. The firm was continued under the name of Haasum, Ernst & Lavalette, and some time later as Haasum & Lavalette, under which name it would move to St. Barthélemy.⁴⁵ The merchants Laurens & Christiaan Jurgensen Holm also originated from Denmark. Their brother, Jurgen Jurgensen Holm, was first mate on the Dutch brigantine *Zeven Provinciën*, which sailed several times between St. Eustatius and Amsterdam during the late 1780s and early 1790s.⁴⁶

The German Henrich Wilmans, already mentioned above with regard to his petition to the Swedish king, was active as a merchant in St. Eustatius in 1788, where he acted as an agent for the King of Denmark. During that year he sent various shipments of coffee, tobacco and sugar to Amsterdam.⁴⁷ A year earlier

44 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 131, sworn statement regarding a current account between Fabry & Sugnin and the Danish Royal West India Company, 12 May 1790, 234r–236r; copy of the current account, 12 May 1790, 238v–240r.

45 The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom (TNA), High Court of Admiralty (HCA), Prize court papers inv. no. 32/342, claims regarding the cargo of the Dutch ship *Gesina Maria*, master Cornelis Jansze Hofker, seized by British warships *Monarch* and *Panther*, document nos. 5–7, invoice and claim dated 14 March 1782, by the London merchant Richard Puller, acting as an agent and correspondent of Danish Merchants Matthi Pieter Ernst and L.H. Haasum, regarding a shipment of coffee, sugar and tobacco, confiscated property of last mentioned merchants, established in the island of St. Eustatius (thanks to Karwan Fatah-Black); NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 134, no. 213, contract of association, 29 December 1785, 467r–468r; procuration dated 8 November 1785, from L.H. Haasum for Pieter Lavalette to cash debts with debtors of Haasum & Ernst in Saint-Domingue, 346r–347v; inv. no. 139, deeds dated 4 and 15 May 1790, 215r–217v.

46 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 129, procuration, dated 7 April 1788, from Laurens and Christiaan Jurgensen Holm for their brother Jurgen Jurgensen Holm, to act on their behalf to settle the estate of their late father Jurgen Lorentzen in Danmark, 256r–257v; inv. nos. 137–139, cargo lists of the ship *Zeeven Provinciën*, 5 April 1788, 10 February and 30 July 1789, and 5 June 1790.

47 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 137, power of attorney, 12 January 1788, fols. 12r–13v; cargo lists of the ships *Veronica Catharina*, *Johanna*, *Nooijt Gedagt*, and *Noord Holland*, 20 February, 20 and 29 March, and 26 May 1788, fols. 142r–143r, 181r–v, 213r–214r, and 341r–342r respectively.

he had founded a partnership with Henrich Muller on St. Thomas under the name of Henrich Muller & Co. In January 1788 Wilmans agreed to include Jacob Christian Sonntag in the merchant house, who was probably from Hamburg, and who was to participate for one third in this partnership, which was renamed Muller, Sonntag & Comp.⁴⁸

In 1789, Jacob Furtado Ainé, a merchant established in Saint-Domingue, came to St. Eustatius as the representative of the merchant houses of both Isaac Rebeijro Furtado & Moijze Ribeijro Furtado in Cap Français and of David Ribeijro Furtado & fils in Amsterdam. He concluded a contract with Levy Furtado & Abraham Ribeijro Furtado on St. Eustatius. They agreed to a merger under the joint name of Furtado, Frères, Cousin et Comp. This newly established company would be active both in Saint-Domingue and St. Eustatius.⁴⁹

These examples demonstrate that the merchant community of St. Eustatius formed part of a complicated network that extended to neighboring colonies as well as to various countries in Europe directly. Nearly all merchants mentioned above were also major exporters to the Dutch Republic and acted as correspondents for merchant houses in the Dutch Republic. Based on the information extracted from 150 cargo lists out of a total of 180 shipments for the period 1781–1795, about 340 merchant houses that shipped tropical produce to the Dutch Republic could be identified on Statia. In the Dutch Republic, more than twice as many firms were active in trade with Statia, although many are only mentioned occasionally and the quantities of their imports were often relatively small. The actual number of individuals involved in trade on both sides might have been smaller, because both in the home country and in the colony, merchants operated in changing alliances.⁵⁰

Free blacks and coloreds were also active in Statian commerce and shipping but on a very modest scale. Unlike Curaçao, where around 1790 more than half of the free population was non-white, free blacks and coloreds on Statia only formed a small minority.⁵¹ In that same year Statia counted 7830 inhabitants:

48 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 137, ship's manifests, 20 February, 29–30 March, and 26 May 1788, 142r–143v, 181r–v, 213r–214r, 181r–v, 341r–342r; Procuration, dated 12 January 1788, from Jacob Christian Sonntag, on behalf of Claus Henrich Sonntag in Hamburg, to settle financial affairs with a man called Jürgen Rohde in St. Thomas, who had mortgaged his plantation to Sonntag for 41,997 mark, 12r–13v; inv. no. 129, contract of commerce and companyship, 11 January 1788, 43r–45v.

49 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 130, contract 23 January 1789, 59r–64r.

50 NL-HaNA, 1.05.213.01, OASE inv. nos. 124–126, 131, 134–141, and 143–144, cargo lists. <https://easy.dans.knaw.nl/ui/datasets/id/easy-dataset:54485> (2013).

51 Wim Klooster, "Subordinate but proud: Curaçao's free blacks and mulattoes in the eighteenth century," *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 68, nos. 3–4 (1994): 283–300, 289, Table 2.

4944 slaves (63 percent), 2375 whites (30 percent), and only 511 free blacks and coloreds (7 percent).⁵² The Statian slaves were employed on the island's sugar plantations, but also in the town of Oranjestad as house slaves and craftsmen, as dockhands in the Lower Town, and as sailors on board the Statian ships. It is not clear why Statia had only a relatively small free non-white population compared to Curaçao. Statia's much later economic rise might have been of influence here. Curaçao, by the end of the seventeenth century, already had a busy port and a rapidly growing urban area offering possibilities for slaves to earn an income of their own, save money and buy their freedom.⁵³

In contrast to Curaçao, in Statian judicial and notarial documents, free blacks and coloreds are only occasionally mentioned. In the notarial archives only a few wills of free non-whites have been found.⁵⁴ And over a ten year period from December 1781 until December 1790, no more than four transport deeds could be retrieved regarding the sale of real estate and nine regarding the sale of slaves, in which free blacks or coloreds were involved.⁵⁵ Statian free black and colored men also would have been employed as sailors. From a sample of 203 muster rolls of local merchant ships, issued between 1781 and

In 1789, Curaçao counted 20,988 inhabitants: 12,864 slaves (61 percent), 3564 whites (17 percent), 3714 free non-whites (18 percent), and a group of 864 "free servants" (4 percent), who were probably colored but could also have been white. In total, 11,543 people (55 percent) lived in the urban area around the harbor. Of the free non-whites 70 percent lived in town, mainly in Otrobanda.

- 52 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.02, NWIC, inv. no. 1196, return of the population in 1789, 706–707.
- 53 Han Jordaan, *Slavernij en vrijheid op Curaçao. De dynamiek van een achttiende-eeuws Atlantisch handelsknooppunt* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2013).
- 54 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 123, ff. 381r–v and 606r–v, two testaments of the free black woman Cathy, dated 4 July and 27 September 1782 respectively; *ibid.*, fols. 373r–v, testament of the free black woman Cloe, 2 July 1782; inv. no. 124, fol. 66r, last will and testament of the free black John Quacu, dated 17 January 1783; *ibidem*, fols. 486r, 487r–488r, deed of opening of the last will and testament of Thomas Crooke, dated 5 July 1783, and the original testament dated 9 March 1780; inv. no. 131, fols. 323r–325r, last will and testament of the free black woman Mary Harris, alias Creagh, dated 28 June 1790.
- 55 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 123, fols. 553r–v, 612r–v, transport deeds of 17 August (house) and 3 October 1782 (slave) respectively; inv. no. 124, fols. 103r–v, 125r, 135r–v, 442r, transport deeds of 4 March (slave; later cancelled), 11 March (slave), 18 March (house), and 23 June 1783 (slave; the buyer is the mother; for the manumission of the same slave, see letter of manumission of 24 June 1783, ff. 444v–445r) respectively; inv. no. 128, fols. 611r–v, transport deed of 23 August 1787 (slave); inv. no. 135, f. 555r and 556r, transport deeds of 24 March and 2 June 1786 (slaves); inv. no. 137, fols. 640r–v, 712r–v, transport deed of 18 October 1788 (house) and 3 December 1788 (slave; sold by a free mulatto woman from St. Kitts); inv. no. 138, fols. 512r–513r, transport deed of 1 September 1789 (house).

1795, in which 2208 crew members were registered, 856 were listed as non-white, both slave and free.⁵⁶ Since there was only a relatively small group of free male non-white Statians – in 1789 there were only 39 free black and 67 free colored men between 16 and 60 years of age⁵⁷ – many of these sailors probably originated from neighboring colonies, and partly also from Curaçao.⁵⁸ On a total of 163 listed shipowners in the muster rolls, only six (one of which was a woman) were designated as free non-whites. Most of these non-white shipowners only became active in the 1790s.⁵⁹ Only a handful of free non-white Statians were active in trade, probably mostly by running a small shop like the free mestizo woman Jenny Fletcher who sold textiles.⁶⁰

Because of their small numbers, the free non-whites were not considered as a potential threat by the Statian whites. But during the revolutionary period of the 1790s, Statian whites were suspicious of blacks and coloreds coming to their island from other places, especially the French colonies. In 1793, foreign free blacks and coloreds were ordered to leave the island, and those newly arrived were not admitted to the colony unless they had obtained special permission because they had been on Statia before and were known to be of good

56 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. nos. 123–131, 134–139.

57 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.02, NWIC, inv. no. 1196, return of the population in 1789, 706.

58 It can be deduced from the sources that a Curaçao community was living on St. Eustatius from the fact that there was a location called “Curaçao Dorp” (Curaçao Village). See: NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 137, fols. 358r–359r, deed of transport of a house in the so-called “Curaçaose Dorp,” situated on a plot of land belonging to Laurence Salomons, and inhabited by the free black Cyrus, dated 31 May 1788.

59 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 137, fol. 373r, muster roll of the sloop *Twee Vrienden*, 5 June 1788, owned by the free mulattoes George Lacombe and Domingo Serido; inv. no. 141, 604r, muster roll of the barque *Catherine*, 10 November 1792, owned by the free mulattoes George Lacombe and Domingo Serido; inv. no. 143, fols. 466r and 651r, muster rolls of the barque *Defiance*, 16 May and 24 July 1793, owned by the free black Peter Doncker; *ibid.*, fol. 563r, muster roll of the barque *Dolphin*, 25 June 1793, free mulattoes George Lacombe and Domingo Serido; *ibid.*, fol. 633r, muster roll of the schooner *Fly & Delight*, 17 July 1793, owned by the free mestizo Labbe Walrand; inv. no. 144, muster roll of the schooner *Jenny & Venus*, 26 July 1794, owned by the free black Peter Doncker; *ibid.*, fols. 405r and 505r, muster rolls of the sloop *Fly* and the barque *Success*, 20 May and 2 July 1794, owned by the free mestizo Labbe Walrand together with the free mulatto Benjamin Solomon; *ibid.*, fols. 478r and 521r, muster rolls of the schooner *Twee Broeders*, 28 June and 15 July 1794, owned by the free mulatto woman Leonora Lagan.

60 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 139, fol. 489r–v, report of an inspection regarding the damage caused by a burglary in the shop of the free mestizo Jenny Fletcher situated on the bay, 29 August 1790.

conduct. It was prohibited for Statian free blacks and coloreds to house or hide any foreign free non-whites.⁶¹

After the Danish decree of 1764 proclaiming St. Thomas and St. John free ports, there was no instant explosion of merchant interest in the colonies. There are very few records detailing the urban population and its activities during this time. St. Thomas was still very much a plantation economy, overshadowed as it was by the extensive cultivation of St. Croix. In 1773, there were 39 sugar and 43 cotton estates, owned mostly by Dutch families present on the island since its early colonization. The plantations were worked by 2523 slaves, and overseen by 42 white persons. It was not until the American War of Independence that there was some added impetus for trade through Charlotte Amalie. The free port now found some utility among neutrals and belligerents alike. The Danish government itself would not pass on the opportunity to profit from the wartime economy of St. Thomas. The *Vestindisk Handelsselskab* (VHS) was created as a limited-charter company in 1778, amassed by the capital of Danish government officials and wealthy Copenhagen merchants. The directors of the Company had their sights set on the importation of Spanish and French colonial goods, primarily coffee, so as not to interfere with the sugar economy on St. Croix. During its short existence, the VHS contributed to making Copenhagen a major center for the re-exportation of coffee in the Baltic, but was also riddled with administrative problems and financial vagaries. It was finally bought in its entirety by the Danish crown in 1786, as the return of peaceful conditions could not sustain its already floundering business.⁶²

Regarding private commercial networks, there is little more to be found in the written sources than some glimpses into the polyglot community that was composed by Charlotte Amalie merchants. A Danish-German traveler, J.P. Nissen, sailing to St. Thomas in 1792, wrote that the number of white inhabitants on the island “may have been between four and five hundred: the greater part of them were Creoles, – the remainder consisted then already of persons of all nations, and almost every language was spoken among them.” Nissen, then a wine merchant’s apprentice, observed the harbor and the movements

61 J.A. Schiltkamp and J.Th. de Smidt, eds., *West Indisch Plakaatboek, 3, Nederlandse Antillen, Bovenwinden, Publikaties en andere wetten betrekking hebbende op St. Maarten, St. Eustatius en Saba, 1648/1681–1816* (Amsterdam: Emmering, 1979), St. Eustatius, no. 91, publication April 1793, 353–355.

62 John P. Knox, *A historical account of St. Thomas* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1852), 89–91; 117–119; P.P. Sveistrup, “Det Kongelige octroyerde Vestindiske Handelsselskab 1778–1785. En drifstøkonomisk undersøgelse,” *Historisk tidsskrift* 10, no. 6 (1942): 385–427.

through it. There were large ships arriving from Hamburg, Altona, Flensburg and Copenhagen, trading their textiles and manufactures and loading colonial goods such as Puerto Rico tobacco and coffee for a return voyage. The greatest part of the intra-Caribbean trade that came into the harbor “were American vessels, small Spanish sloops and boats, and large English merchant-men.” The Americans brought in provisions, lumber and shingles, and they sailed out with rum and sugar in return. The Spaniards exchanged German linens and English manufactured goods, bringing along much-needed silver coin from the Spanish main and Puerto Rico. The Charlotte Amalie of 1792 that Nissen wrote about was a cosmopolitan Caribbean port with regional connections, especially with Spanish dominions, whose trade was of the utmost importance. The ties with European shipping were also there, with Danish ships importing all varieties of colonial goods with the conspicuous exception of sugar, a result of the exclusive sugar trading rights for St. Croix inhabitants.⁶³

Whereas many merchants in Statia and St. Thomas had been living in the islands for decades, the early history of Swedish St. Barthélemy presents a different population structure. Contemporary Swedish observers in 1788 saw an island inhabited by a “great many adventurers.” These persons were maritime transients, who, for the most part, had come there running from creditors elsewhere and would have no qualms leaving the island again if the opportunity arose. Settled merchants with sizeable capital and property were few, and the trade circulating through the harbor of Gustavia was by all accounts modest in scope and nature. There were, for example, the Americans Arthurton and Basden, who traded North American merchandise for rum and sugar coming from surrounding islands. There was a group of petty French traders, among them Bernié, Le May, Renaldy, Junius and Martins, who dealt in a small-scale retailing of French goods, such as textiles, wines, haberdashery, glass- and tin-ware. There were also a few traders acting as commissioners or agents for merchants on other islands such as St. Martin and St. Kitts. The firm of Haasum and Lavalette which, as mentioned earlier, was also established in St. Eustatius, was the only business which retailed goods from the Dutch islands, and they were also involved in the American trade. The majority of the urban population were not actively involved in intra-Caribbean trade, but were employed as artisans, hawkers, and shop- and innkeepers.⁶⁴

63 J.P. Nissen, *Reminiscences of a 46 Years Residence in the Islands of St. Thomas in the West Indies* (Nazareth, PA: Senseman & Co., 1838), 7–9.

64 Christopher Carlander, *Resan till St Barthélemy. Dr. Christopher Carlanders resejournal 1787–1788* (Stockholm: Kungl. Vetenskapsakademien, 1969), 74–80.

The trade passing through St. Barthélemy in its early phase of Swedish colonization was, at times, lively, but was as a rule dominated by often illicit, small-scale regional cabotage journeys, which lacked the European-bound character of the commerce present in Statia and St. Thomas at the same time. In 1787 for instance, for which there are some rare surviving custom house records, the port of Gustavia was visited by 1033 ships. A general impression of the trade emerges from the figures of the busiest month of June. There were 159 arrivals, of which a large majority of 78 vessels came from British colonies in the Caribbean. Twenty-six ships came from North American ports, from Guadeloupe and Martinique there were nine arrivals and from Statia there were 21. There was only a single vessel coming from the Danish colonies. Departures for the same period display essentially the same pattern, with 84 departures for British colonial destinations, 14 departures for North America, 29 for Statia, six for Guadeloupe and Martinique and, finally, two vessels for the Danish colonies. During the ten extant months found in the custom house records of 1787, only three Swedish ships entered the harbor from European ports of departure. Not a single non-Swedish ship arrived from Europe during the same year. The establishment of the SWIC would not change the picture considerably regarding traffic from Sweden. The majority of the vessels clearing through Gustavia were small packboats, schooners and sloops, of around 20 Swedish lasts or roughly 40 tons. The only exception was the American-flagged ships, generally of a larger build. The ships traveling back and forth from North American ports carried lumber, victuals and tobacco, while ships coming from neighboring colonies freighted local produce such as sugar, coffee, rum and molasses.⁶⁵

After news of the Dutch Patriot coup had reached St. Barthélemy in January 1788, there passed a brief moment of high anticipation among the Swedish officials on the island. A few wealthy merchants from surrounding islands, including St. Eustatius, had recently bought lots of land and rented property in Gustavia, and the governor, Von Rosenstein, also counted on a rumored Anglo-French war as an opportunity for the small island to advance its role as a regional marketplace.⁶⁶ The hopes were in vain, however, as no regime change came about in the Dutch Republic, and there was no international conflict yet between Great Britain and France. Instead, Sweden itself was entangled in a war with Russia, which led to considerable delays for the Swedish colonial project. The commercial networks of St. Barthélemy would remain of a circumscribed and local character at least up until the outbreak of war in 1793.

65 Custom house records 1787, SBS 28, SNA; Hildebrand, *Den svenska kolonin St Barthélemy*, 163–164.

66 Von Rosenstein's report 21 January 1788, SBS 1B:1, SNA.

That year would bring the beginning of a transformation of the transit trade in the region, which would have consequences for Gustavia as well as Charlotte Amalie.

Changing Conditions on St. Eustatius and Migration to the Scandinavian Colonies After 1795

The picture that emerges after 1781 shows that the Statian economy, in the first place, suffered from the lack of a clear trade policy as a result of the particularism of various parties in the Dutch Republic vis-à-vis demands from possibly equally self-interested merchants in St. Eustatius. During the economic heyday preceding the British occupation, the many hundreds of American, British, and French merchant ships that called at the island provided the Company with a handsome income from the duties paid on imports and exports, moorage etc. At the same time, a steady and voluminous stream of tropical produce reached the home country; exporters in the Dutch Republic found a ready market for their products and many industries and suppliers directly or indirectly associated with the Statian trade also benefited. During the years following the British occupation in 1781, the volume of shipping and trade dropped considerably, reducing not only the income of the Company but also reducing the turnover and profits of many Dutch merchants and other entrepreneurs who had previously benefited from the Statian trade. The WIC intended to repair its loss of proceeds and decided in 1786 to raise the tariffs on trade in St. Eustatius. This caused a vehement reaction from the Statian merchant community. In a number of petitions, proposals, and memorials, coauthored by some prominent foreign merchants like the Frenchman Vaucrosson and the Bermudian R.D. Jennings, the Company plans were protested while fears were uttered regarding the growing competition from the Danish and Swedish free ports as well as French, Spanish, and British free trade experiments. It was feared that the intended increase of duties would be the deathblow for the Statian trade.⁶⁷

67 Schiltkamp and De Smidt, *West Indisch Plakaatboek*, 3, St. Maarten no. 149, "Resolutie van de bewindhebbers van de WIC van 9 oktober 1786 het overgezonden tarief van in- en uitvoerrechten van kracht te doen zijn," 17/19 Februarij 1787, 122; NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.02, NWIC inv. no. 1195, copy of a petition by David Mendez, F. Sugnin, W. Stevenson, Daniel Hopker, R.D. Jennings, M. Dubrois Godet, Jan Schimmel Hendriksz, Vaucrosson, received 21 March 1787, 351–357; copy of a petition by 68 merchants to acting governor and councilors, received 14 March 1787, 423–425; copy of a petition by David Mendes, Frederik

The growth and decline of economic activity on St. Eustatius is usually gauged by the numbers of ships entering and clearing Orange Bay. In 1792, an average of nearly 300 ships a month called at the island, a number comparable to pre-1781 conditions and an indication that supposed regional competition was at that time hardly felt. Exports to the Dutch Republic, however, although clearly recovering after peace was concluded in 1784, did not reach the same levels as during the 1770s. In 1792, the highest post-war volume of trade was reached when 28 ships laden with tropical produce sailed to the home country. After the first half of 1793 – in February France had declared war on the Dutch Republic – the monthly number of ships dropping anchor in the Statian roadstead was suddenly halved.⁶⁸ Registers of incoming and outgoing ships for the years thereafter have not been found, but in the archive of St. Eustatius a register of import duties was preserved. The figures regarding the money collected monthly from arriving ships make the demise of the colony as an Atlantic trading hub visible. Until August 1793, an average monthly amount of 433 pesos or Spanish dollars⁶⁹ (f1049) was received. This fell to

Sugnin, William Stevenson, Daniel Hopker, R.D. Jennings, Martin Dubrois Godet, Jan Schimmel Hendrisz, Vaucrosson and Hendrik Pandt to acting governor and councillors, 21 maart 1787, 427–432; copy of a petition signed by 116 merchants and ship captains, dated 15 March 1787, 435–438; “Memorie en Representatie tot Herstel van den handel & vaart des Eijlands St. Eustatius,” by Jan Schimmel Hendiksz, Hendrik Pandt and D. Mendez, 17 juli 1787, 599–625; copy of a statement by Martin Dubrois Godet, received 20 July 1787, 627–636; NL-HaNA, 2.21.006.49, CVH inv. no. 154g, copy of a document dated 20 July 1787, signed by R.D. Jennings, Vaucrosson, and W. Stevenson, nos. 37–66v.

68 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.02, NWIC inv. no. 633, list of incoming and outgoing ships 1778, 111–286; inv. no. 635, register of incoming and outgoing ships 1784, 131–283; 1.05.02, Raad van Coloniën (RvC) inv. no. 90, monthly registers of incoming and outgoing ships, January 1792–December 1793.

69 The peso, Spanish dollar, or piastre gourde was the regular currency and financial unit of account in both the Dutch Leeward and Windward Islands, as well as in the Danish and Swedish colonies. The commercial exchange rate between the peso and Swedish and Danish rixdollars are not precisely known, but Swedish descriptions from around 1786 give one piastre gourde as equal 42–44 shillings specie. That is, not quite one Swedish rixdollar specie (48 shillings specie). Hildebrand, *Den svenska kolonin St Barthélemy* 67–69; I have yet to find any estimate for the Danish colonies, as there was an established difference between West Indies current money (*vestindisk courant*) and Danish current money (*dansk courant*), which was universally given in account books and the like. Commercial exchange rates, of course, depended on many other factors apart from face value and the weight in silver. See the discussion in John J. McCusker, *Money and Exchange in Europe and America* (London: MacMillan, 1978), 116–120, 291–299.

185 pesos (f444) a month during the remaining part of that year. In 1794, the monthly average rose a little to 228 pesos (f547), but in 1795 it fell to 64 pesos (f153). In 1796 and 1797, the last years for which information is available, this figure plummeted to a mere 29 pesos (f69) and 20 pesos (f48) a month, respectively.⁷⁰

This coincides with the decrease in exports from Statia to the Dutch Republic. After 1792, the number of shipments declined with only one ship sailing to the home country in 1795. The explanation for this development is clear: war. During the turbulent two decades that followed after the outbreak of the French Revolution, the Dutch were almost continually involved as one of the belligerents. Between 1793 and 1795, the Dutch were at war with revolutionary France. After French troops invaded the Republic and the Batavian Republic was proclaimed in January 1795, the Dutch sided with France in the war against Great Britain. In that same year, St. Eustatius was put under the “protection” of the French, which came down to a de facto occupation that lasted until 1801, when the British conquered the three Dutch Leeward Islands. During this period, the French colonies – the most important suppliers of tropical produce to Statia – were largely in a state of chaos as far as they had not been occupied by the British. The United States, another very important trading partner, was entangled in the so-called Quasi War with France between 1798 and 1800. During these years, French privateers were actively hunting down American vessels in Caribbean waters, so these were not likely to call at an island that was controlled by the French. Statia, St. Martin, and Saba were returned to the Dutch after the Peace of Amiens in 1802. But by that time, the Dutch Leeward colonies had economically become totally insignificant. A year later, the war was continued. In 1810 the islands were again occupied by the British. When Statia came under Dutch rule again in 1816, its population had declined to 2591: 507 whites, 336 free coloreds and 1748 slaves.⁷¹

The Scandinavian free port colonies could be neutral havens where refugees would find accommodation whether they ran from debt, conflict, persecution or other calamities, or, in the case of the Statians discussed below, where they sought greater economic opportunity. The nature of turmoil in the region from the 1790s

70 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 240, register of collected import duties, September 1792–October 1797.

71 Cornelis C. Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas, 1680–1791* (Assen: Van Gorcum & Co, 1985), 146–154; For the repercussions of the Quasi War for the Dutch in the Caribbean see also: Han Jordaan, “Patriots, privateers and international politics: the myth of the conspiracy of Jean Baptiste Tierce Cadet,” in *Curaçao in the Age of Revolutions, 1795–1800*, ed. Wim Klooster and Gert Oostindie (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2011), 141–169.

onwards resulted in extensive and complex migration flows, as Caribbean colonies were engulfed in internal conflicts and were subject to external aggression. After the news of the French Revolution reached the Caribbean in 1789, Frenchmen of various political convictions took refuge on neutral islands. St. Barthélemy received many refugees from Martinique and Guadeloupe, whereas St. Thomas was a destination for refugees from Saint-Domingue. Successive migration waves occurred after the Revolution, during the British occupations of neighboring islands, and after Guadeloupe was retaken by Victor Hugues in 1794.

A first great wave of migration took place in 1793–1794 by a heterogeneous group of inhabitants from Martinique and Guadeloupe, consisting both of revolutionary sympathizers and royalists. In May of 1793, the Swedish Governor Bagge commented with mixed sentiments on the arrival of French families. On the one hand, he lamented granting protection to foreign “adventurers” and bankrupt persons, which he saw as a potential threat to public tranquillity. On the other hand, he welcomed those “familiar traders” from the French islands who brought with them “considerable property, consisting of slaves, households, cash etc.”⁷²

Other immigrants were also influencing the turn of events in the neutral free ports. The French capture of Statia, St. Martin and Saba in 1795 prompted an exodus of their former inhabitants. St. Eustatius was a source of considerable migration. A cohort of displaced St. Eustatius merchants became naturalized Swedish and Danish subjects towards the close of the eighteenth century, and some would be of great consequence for their newly-adopted home colonies. Already in 1781 there had been a slight surge in Dutch-language migrants to St. Thomas, a likely effect of the smaller relocations or resettlements from Statia after the British occupation in 1781. The remainder of the settlers bore English, Spanish and French names, few of which could be definitively linked to Dutch colonies.⁷³ The emigration of some Sephardic Jews from St. Eustatius to St. Thomas after 1781 is an exception, but it is difficult to trace other non-Dutch former residents of Statia from the available evidence. The records do not show any significant migration of former Dutch colonial residents prior to the mid-1790s in either of the Scandinavian colonies. Judging by the available statistics, there is a markedly higher increase in the population of St. Barthélemy around 1795 than figures for corresponding years in St. Thomas. Evidence of

72 C.F. Bagge's report 28 May 1793, SBS 1B:2, SNA.

73 St. Thomas og St. Jan guvernement mm.; Gruppeordnede sager – Sociale og kulturelle forhold; Borgerbrevsprotokoll 1755–1788, 693/11.53.171, Vestindiske lokalarkiver, DNA; Anne Lebel, “Saint Barthélemy et ses archives: une connaissance historique éclatée,” *Bulletin de la société d'histoire de la Guadeloupe* 59 (2011): 91–102, 96.

Dutch colonists immigrating to the Swedish colony is found in other documentary evidence. The Swedish judge Johan Norderling wrote to the Board of Directors of the SWIC in July of 1795 detailing the recent growth of Gustavia. He wrote, "The amount of houses are now nearly doubled, some of them quite beautiful," and went on to comment that, "All trade in St. Eustache is ruined, all warehouses at the present closed, and the wealthier houses gone away, some here, some to other islands."⁷⁴

Indeed, supporting Norderling's assertion of the transformation of Gustavia, it is clearly evident from town maps drawn out in 1791, 1796, 1799 and 1800 respectively, that the expansion of Gustavia was considerable during this time. In 1791, the town was composed of 133 buildings, while in 1796 this figure had nearly trebled, and in 1800 the town could boast over 800 separate buildings ranging from the largest warehouse to the smallest cooking shed.⁷⁵ Norderling attributed this growth to the Statian merchants, and he also hinted at the wealth that some apparently brought with them. Others made similar conclusions, such as the Company agent Gustav Wernberg, who thought the island could "reap great profits" from the recent immigration from the Dutch colonies, "if only a perfect neutrality would be observed, and that no Nation should be favored par preference."⁷⁶ The available statistics offer an overview of the migration to the islands of St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy between 1789–1838, as shown in Tables 11.1 and 11.2.

While many migrants arrived solely because they needed a sanctuary, there were many who stayed and became naturalized inhabitants of their new colonies. In order for foreigners to become a naturalized Swedish or Danish subject by settling in Gustavia or Charlotte Amalie, they had to make a cash payment and sign an oath of fidelity and allegiance. St. Barthélemy had a differential scale for payment for naturalization and burgher rights. For merchants who wanted to be able to sail their vessels under Swedish colors, a one-time

74 J. Norderling to SWIC, 13.7.1795, Handel och sjöfart, vol. 169, SNA. "All handel i St. Eustache är förstörd, alla magaziner tilsvdare igenslagne, och de rikare husen bortflyttade, en del hit, en del til andra öar – Den som lämnat St. Barthelemy för tre år sedan, skulle nu knappast igenkänna staden Gustavia: Antalet af husen äro nära fördubblade och några af dem tämeligen vackra."

75 Samuel Fahlberg, *Charta öfver Gustavia på S:t Barthelemi Som det förhöllt sig den 30 april 1796*; Samuel Fahlberg, *Charta öfver Staden Gustavia*, dated Gustavia 18 October 1799; Samuel Fahlberg, *Charta öfver Staden Gustavia*, dated Gustavia 12 April 1800, The Military Archives of Sweden; see also Holger Weiss, "Det svenska kolonialprojektets komplexa rum: om slaveriet under svensk flagg i slutet av 1700-talets karibiska och atlantiska värld," *Sjuttonhundratals. Nordic Yearbook for Eighteenth-Century Studies* (2012), 59–92.

76 G. Wernberg to SWIC, 14.9.1795, Handel och sjöfart, vol. 169, SNA.

TABLE 11.1 *Urban population, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, 1789–1838.*

Year	Urban slaves	Urban free colored	Urban white	Total urban	Island total free & slave	Urban as percentage of island total	Slaves as percentage of urban total
1789	1527	260	398	2185	5266	39.5	73.2
1794	1715	243	578	2536	4627	54.8	67.6
1796	2021	239	619	2879	5720	50.3	70.2
1797	1943	239	726	2908	5734	50.7	66.8
1800	2561	714	1185	4460	7699	57.9	57.4
1831	2894	3408	4769	11,071	13,492	82.0	26.1
1838	2093	5024	1770	8887	11,433	77.7	23.5

Source: Reviderede vestindiske regnskaber; Matrikel for St. Thomas og St. Jan 1755–1915, dna; Neville Hall, *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 90, 189.

TABLE 11.2 *Urban population, Gustavia, St. Barthélemy, 1788–1838.*

Year	Urban slaves	Urban free colored	Urban white	Total urban	Island total free & slave	Urban as percentage of island total	Slaves as percentage of urban total
1788	279	83	294	656	1663	39.4	42.5
1794	554	590*	—	1144	2212	51.7	25
1796	981	388	682	2051	3190	64.3	47.8
1806	1424	802	835	3061	—**	**	46.5
1812	1818	1025	1038	3881	5482	70.7	33.2
1819	—**	—**	—**	2910	4587	63.4	—**
1834	—**	—**	—**	2080	3720	55.9	—**
1838	338	1074*	—	1412	2965	47.6	11.4

Sources: St. Barthélemysamlingen (sbs) 28, sna; Yolande Lavoie, Carolyn Fick and Francine-M. Mayer, "A Particular Study of Slavery in the Caribbean Island of Saint Barthélemy: 1648–1846," *Caribbean Studies* 28, no. 2 (1995): 369–403; Yolande Lavoie, "Histoire sociale et démographique d'une communauté isolée: Saint Barthélemy (Antilles françaises)," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 42, no. 3 (1989): 411–427.

* This figure includes the total for whites as well.

** Figures for these groups are not available.

payment of 100 pesos was necessary. For settlers who wanted to support themselves by crafts or other business ventures within the town limits, 16 Spanish dollars was required. For the right of simply being a Swedish subject and the right of residence in Gustavia, only one dollar was to be paid. These scales were a clear reflection of both the ambition to attract merchants who carried substantial capital and the desire to make it easy to provide settlement for the much-needed mariners and craftsmen who were the bulk of the workforce.⁷⁷

The next years would see some notable Statian émigrés becoming Swedish or Danish subjects. The most prominent merchants to move from St. Eustatius to St. Barthélemy, for example, were not Dutch by birth. A notable migrant from St. Eustatius was the Italian John Joseph Cremony, a native of Gaeta, near Naples. Born in 1756, he had established himself as a Statian merchant in 1781, as he was enumerated in the list of burghers that the British had made up during the occupation. He seems to have settled in St. Barthélemy by 1796, as had the Vaucrosson family. Both Cremony and the Vaucrossons came to have leading positions in the mixed community that was Gustavia after the migrations of the 1790s. The migrants' transition to a new colony was not one characterized by complete accord with the new administration and smooth accommodation into a new society. The freedom of trade in both St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy was hampered by restrictions that had been non-existent in Statia. Locally registered ships were, as a rule, not allowed to freight ships to Europe under Swedish or Danish flags. Local merchants who wished to remit cargoes to European ports were forced to find circuitous and costly means to do this, usually chartering ships under a different flag. This was a great source of discontent among the merchant elite, and was the most serious question surrounding trade in the colonies during the early nineteenth century. Abraham Runnels, a Statian residing in St. Barthélemy, summed up the pleas of the merchant class in a letter to the Swedish Trade and Finance Department in 1814, in which he stated that:

[...] three essential links in the chain is wanting. Namely the confidence of the Merchants in Sweden, the facilities of Markets for colonial produce within her Territories and the faculty of navigating with the vessels of this colony in the European Seas & Ports. If the comparison could be rendered

77 See, for example, "HIS MAJESTY'S Gracious Taxation Act, whereafter the below specified Public duties on the Island of St. Bartholomew are provisionally to be paid, Given at the Palace of Carlsruhe March 26, 1804," *Report of Saint Bartholomew*, 26 September 1804. Similar taxations were in effect in earlier years, but this is the first documented taxation act found in print. <http://www.memoirestbarth.com/st-barts/traite-negriere/premier-journal-local>.

complete by supplying the chain with these three links, we might be unconcerned about the rivalry of any new free ports (which could grow out of a new order of things) possessing no greater physical means than we do; but possibly not so favored in the matter of jurisprudence.⁷⁸

According to Runnels, the restrictions exacerbated the fact that commerce on the island was too dependent on North American shipping, which, in reality, was the only source of outside supplies and provisions to the nearby colonies. Runnels was writing this when the War of 1812 still raged between the United States and Great Britain. The war was, by all available accounts, the zenith of profitability for the Swedish colony in terms of harborside traffic, but the North American merchants enjoyed the most advantages, according to Runnels. The “new order of things” was a reference to the resumption of peacetime commerce, which would inevitably entail the return of occupied colonies to their former owners.

It is slightly more problematic to detail the instances of Statian merchants moving to St. Thomas, as burgher brief protocols are missing for key years from the 1790s onwards. However, in an undated and unsigned report found in the local administrative archive of St. Barthélemy, there is some unequivocal evidence of relocated Statians residing in St. Thomas. The report was in all likelihood penned by the Swedish harbormaster at St. Barthélemy, Anders Furuträd, because he had been assigned in 1802 to investigate the rival Danish colony from a large number of perspectives, and the report is the likely end result of these investigations. The report is a systematic overview of conditions and regulations in the Danish colony, and it is attached with a list of the island’s “most distinguished” merchants. At the top of this list, the Bermudian and former Statian resident Richard Downing Jennings is found, perhaps not so surprisingly, as the dominantly Anglophone Danish island of St. Thomas had for some time become a node in Bermudian trade networks.⁷⁹

If focus is shifted onto other groups than the white merchant elite, there are other migration patterns to observe. In the free ports, seafaring and artisan trades constituted the major areas of occupation. The growth of the free colored population of Charlotte Amalie had been dramatic during the first three

78 Abraham Runnels to Carl David Skogman, 9 June 1814, St Barthélemy-samlingen (SBS), vol. 3 A, SNA.

79 Image 281–282, vol. 260, Correspondence (C), Fonds Suédois de Saint-Barthélemy (FSB), Archives nationales d’outre-mer (ANOM), Aix-en-Provence, Uppsala University FSB digitization project; For further examples of Statians and Bermudians in St. Thomas, see Jarvis, *In the Eye Of All Trade*, 163–167, 170, 353, 432.

decades of the nineteenth century. The enumerated population of Charlotte Amalie's able-bodied free colored male adult population on 28 May 1802 shows a total of 221 individuals. The enumeration indicates the origin of these inhabitants, one originating from St. John, ten from St. Croix and 122 from St. Thomas. Out of the remaining 89 – 40 percent of the total – all were of foreign origin. Among those émigrés, a majority of 39 were former residents of Curaçao, whereas 30 others hailed from neighboring St. Eustatius. The remainder came from French and British colonies, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Barbados and Jamaica. These inhabitants display a pattern of continuing intra-Caribbean migration reinforced by political vicissitudes reverberating in the region. Immigration was also likely to be influenced by existing ties of ethnicity, family and commerce. The existence of this list is due to some very specific motivations. The rapid increase in the size of the free colored population, coupled with its high foreign component, led to some fears among the governing white population. It influenced the Danish governor-general von Walterstorff to establish the first "St. Thomas Commission for the Registering of the Free Coloured" in February of 1803. It raised questions about whether the presence of foreign free coloreds was desirable and advantageous or if it was a dangerous burden to the colony. Von Walterstorff specifically targeted colored migrants from the French colonies because of their perceived subversive ideas and activities inspired by the French and Haitian Revolutions. It also highlighted the large number of women from Curaçao and elsewhere who roamed the streets of Charlotte Amalie, engaging in petty trade and bartering. It was observed that their knowledge of Spanish and Spanish customs placed the local creoles at a disadvantage, because these women could acquire and sell merchandise from nearby Puerto Rico with ease and usually with high profit margins. The commission outlined some possible measures, ranging from targeted taxation to outright deportations, but none of these proposals seems to have materialized, save for the expulsion of a select number of free colored persons with origins in French West Indian colonies. The commission and its records are indicative of the ambiguous attitudes of colonial administrators in the Danish West Indies towards different types of migrants. While the overall view of migration and settlement in the free ports was benign, administrators differentiated between what they perceived to be valuable as opposed to potentially disruptive external elements in their colonies. Comparing Walterstorff's concerns about free colored migrations with the gleeful accounts of wealthy Statian settlement on St. Barthélemy by local officials, this becomes quite clear.⁸⁰

80 Hall, *Slave Society*, 178–189.

The period after the British occupation of both St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy showed signs of consolidation, growth and material advance by their respective free colored populations. In St. Thomas after 1802, the registers for sea passes included information of shipowner and shipmaster burgher licenses and the so-called free-briefs, which stated the date of manumission or birth. In the years 1803–1807, the share of free colored shipowners stood at 8.6 percent, and the share of shipmasters at 14.6 percent, which indicates that this group also participated directly in the colony's growing merchant community.⁸¹ Civic rights for free colored were discussed from time to time. At the request of the council of St. Barthélemy, the question of civic rights for the free colored, specifically their electability for public service, was debated in Stockholm in 1812. The notion was rejected with explicit reference to the Revolution in Saint-Domingue, arguing that extended civic rights was dangerous, that "such a change would with time result in that all property end up in the hands of the free coloured." In the Danish West Indies, the free colored tried to advance their own rights in the form of the so-called freedman petition of 1816, aspiring for the same civic rights and privileges as the white population. It would take several more years to gain these formal rights, as they were granted in St. Barthélemy in 1822 and 1830 in the Danish West Indies.⁸²

When the war had broken out in April 1793, the British government was determined that the trade of the French Caribbean colonies should not be carried in neutral vessels. This led, in turn, to the stopping, searching and sending for adjudication of all suspicious neutral vessels. Much to the dismay of merchants and officials in the neutral free ports, locally registered vessels were affected by a great number of confiscations. Amid the protests, any pretensions of innocence were hard to prove. Swedish officials, for instance, knew too well that "3/4 of our commerce consists of smuggling," and that the majority of smuggling was conducted with the French colonies, "from whence we get our sugar, coffee, cotton, rum, cocoa &c."⁸³ While the British Orders-in-Council in 1793 were aimed at the economic deprivation of France and its colonies, they were a gross diplomatic miscalculation insofar as they drew heavy protest from the United States, which led to a partial reversal of the Orders-in-Council in the latter part of the 1790s. During much of the French Revolutionary War it was in the interest of the British government to follow a policy more solicitous

81 Udskrift af St. Jan og St. Thomas søpasprotokol, 1788–1807, 365/384, Vestindisk-guinesisk renteskriverkontor, Generaltoldkammeret – Ældre del, DNA.

82 E.O.E. Högström, *S. Barthélemy under svenskt välde* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1888), Hall, *Slave Society*, 175; Thomasson, 6–7.

83 J. Norderling to SWIC, 30 June 1796, Handel och sjöfart, vol. 169, SNA.

to the neutrals than had been customary in previous wars. The Americans, in particular, whose trade with Britain itself was more important than had it had ever been and whose wartime cooperation in the Caribbean was also sought, received differential treatment throughout the war. The Americans had emerged as independent neutral carriers, supplying Caribbean colonies with essential food supplies and other provisions, and remained as key actors and middlemen in the regional trade throughout the French Revolutionary Wars and the Napoleonic Wars. The free ports themselves also drew direct scrutiny from the British. When news reached London about the formation of the League of Armed Neutrality in 1801, the British War Secretary, Henry Dundas, sent secret orders to the military and naval commanders in the Leewards to seize the islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, St. John and St. Barthélemy, and all Danish, Swedish and Russian goods discovered there. The islands were occupied and were only returned after the Treaty of Amiens was signed in 1802.⁸⁴

Despite the toll taken on St. Barthélemy and St. Thomas merchants during the war up until 1802, both by British seizures at sea and the eventual occupation of the colony, the last decade of the eighteenth century was a period of increasing profitability for the island. St. Barthélemy shows the most dramatic transformation during this time. Consisting of negligible sums in 1791, the incomes from port duties and tariffs shot up and hit a high point of over 40,000 Spanish dollars in 1799.⁸⁵ The Scandinavian colonies had come to be dominated by resident local merchants, all with nominal Swedish and Danish citizenship, although, in reality, consisting of Frenchmen, Dutchmen, Spaniards, Americans, Englishmen and other nationalities. These merchants bought up incoming cargoes from North America or Europe, bought or chartered the necessary ships, and traded to and from ports in the Caribbean officially closed to foreign traffic.⁸⁶ This was the essential arrangement that existed in the free port of St. Barthélemy until the Congress of Vienna in 1814, and in St. Thomas until the British occupation of 1807. The sweeping British conquests of French colonies after 1807 affected the neutral trade considerably, but American shipping

84 Lydia Wahlström, *Sverige och England under revolutionskrigens början: Bidrag till den Reuterholmska regeringens historia* (Stockholm: Norstedt & Söner, 1917), 217–243; Governor Ankarheims reports 21 March 1801, 17 June 1801, 18 July 1801 and 22 July 1802, SBS 1C, SNA.

85 A sum, which roughly would represent about 1 percent of the value of cargoes passing through the island. St Barthélemy account books, 1793–1814, St Barthélemyssamlingen (SBS), vol. 25A–D.

86 Michael Craton, "The Caribbean Vice Admiralty Courts, 1763–1815; Indispensable Agents of an Imperial System" (unpublished PhD diss., McMaster University, 1968), 137–141, 289.

still was vital in holding the illicit trade channels open. St. Barthélemy was one convenient port through which American shipping found an outlet.⁸⁷

The rationale and the need for these free marketplaces, operating on the fringes of a mercantilist framework, had been removed after the return to peace. St. Thomas, on the other hand, continued to develop despite of these events, and maintained its population, although it was occupied by the British in 1807–1815. After the occupation it went through a significant development by becoming a regional coal depot for transatlantic steamers and a station for the Royal Mail packet boats. These facts explain the subsequent demographic development beyond the 1820s.

Conclusion

Although the damage caused by the British occupation of 1781 was substantial for St. Eustatius, resident merchants nonetheless rebuilt their businesses. Worries about nascent competition from neighboring colonies such as St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy were clearly present, but this only became acute when the WIC decided to introduce a new tariff on imports and exports which suddenly threatened to put the island in a very disadvantaged position. During the early 1790s, exports to the Dutch Republic grew, reaching a post-war peak in 1792. Commercial activity did not move to neighboring competitors, as was initially feared. Many of the merchants that had been active before 1781 remained on the island or returned after a brief absence. Many of the “adventurers” who dominated the Statian community shortly before the arrival of the British left the island and a more stable population was formed, which could effectively use its trading networks that had sometimes been built over generations. One critical component had nevertheless been lost in the previous war: neutrality in international conflicts. Beginning in 1793, the Dutch were involved in two decades of almost continuous warfare. This was the deathblow to Statia’s role as regional market, and, hence, the impetus for emigration from the island.

For St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy, the decline of the Dutch colonies after 1795 had a lasting impact. At the same time as the former competition became phased out, it also contributed to colonial development through immigration. The colonies attracted high numbers of new settlers, among them many former prominent Statians and other former Dutch colonial residents. The same Statian merchants who were active in the post-1781 debate were among the

87 Ibid., 289, 326–328.

first to move to the Scandinavian colonies and establish themselves as the new elite in their newly adopted societies. However, the majority of migrants were artisans, craftsmen, mariners, workers and slaves, who also followed in the migration waves of the 1790s into St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy, apart from the larger merchant houses whose establishments and property took root in the islands during the same period. The administrations in the receiving colonies saw this phenomenon as having a positive effect, visibly gauged by urban growth and increasing trade activities. Without this influx of capital and people from neighboring colonies, the future of the Scandinavian free ports would undoubtedly have been much different. The prime mover of migration and the subsequent growth of commerce in St. Barthélemy and St. Thomas was inextricably linked to war and conflict, coupled with the benefits of Swedish and Danish neutrality. Circumvention of mercantilist regulation and the evasion of belligerent maritime forces was made possible with Swedish and Danish citizenship in the Caribbean. Moreover, Swedish and Danish citizenship was desirable for newcomers aspiring to support themselves and to prosper, as it conferred advantages in the form of civic rights, favorably low taxes and other costs. Conflict made the free ports convenient marketplaces and attracted merchant capital, but conflict also entailed a high degree of involuntary migration due to the hazards of war. Thus, a large number of migrants came to the island only by accident.

Regional economic and social networks persisted to a large extent, despite changing political realities. The evidence in our contribution suggests a continuity in the transit trade centered around free ports in the Caribbean, as actors from Dutch colonies, St. Eustatius in particular, shifted their commercial operations and family businesses to neutral colonies when circumstances demanded it. The phenomenon of the migration waves of the 1790s were not in any way atypical. The largely heterogeneous and cosmopolitan community of St. Eustatius included a high number of migrants and transients before 1781, and free port colonies were open places where the mobility of people, goods, capital and ideas were defining features of society. The migrations after 1795 and their consequences also testify to the complicated interconnectedness of the region in general, and for the free ports in particular. Distinctive and mutually important connections existed between the Dutch, Danish and Swedish free ports and their inhabitants. These connections became particularly visible during the period 1780–1820, when ports and plantation colonies of the minor Caribbean colonial powers adjusted to the changing realities on both sides of the Atlantic. It also underscores the usefulness of a regional and transnational perspective, which, left unexplored, leaves all of the contacts and interactions as a mere background in a “national Atlantic” perspective.