

Migration

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Overseas trading companies were the driving force behind English commercial and territorial expansion during the seventeenth century. In early modern England corporations played a prominent role in municipal administration, the regulation of domestic trade associations such as the City of London's livery companies, and the governance of religious organisations.¹ As part of a longstanding tradition which was premised upon Roman law, corporations united individuals with a common interest into a single legal entity to promote the shared aims of the collective. Beginning in the late sixteenth century, English joint-stock corporations were granted royal charters to monopolise trade with various regions of the world. For example, members of the Levant Company forged political alliances with the Ottoman Empire and erected trading posts in the eastern Mediterranean for the provision of raw silk, pepper and indigo, whereas the Muscovy Company enjoyed a monopoly over English trade with Russia from 1555 to 1698. While there have been a number of political and economic histories written about early modern trading companies, the role that corporations played in shaping patterns of migration across the Atlantic and Indian Ocean worlds has been understated in the field of global history. Studying the varying types of migration presided over by chartered companies offer novel insights into the operation of colonial empires in the early modern world.

The distinctiveness of this approach can be demonstrated by engaging with the 'pillars of corporate sociology for global interaction' identified in the introduction to this volume. The importance of overseas migration to the successful functioning of long distance trade during the early modern period will be considered in the first section of this essay. It will be argued that trading diasporas and chartered companies surmounted the technological limitations to conducting overseas commerce in similar ways, primarily by dispatching

1 William Pettigrew, 'Corporate Constitutionalism and the Dialogue between the Global and Local in Seventeenth-Century English History', *Itinerario*, Vol. 39, Issue 3, (December 2015); David Armitage, 'Wider Still and Wider: Corporate Constitutionalism Unbounded', *Itinerario*, Vol. 39, Issue 3 (December 2015): 502; Philip Withington, *Society in Early Modern England: The Vernacular Origins of Some Powerful Ideas* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 219.

their members or employees to settle in distant communities and broker cross-cultural exchange. However, it was shared membership of corporate bodies and access to the communication channels of the company, rather than religious or ethnic ties, which helped merchants working under the remit of overseas trading companies to foster the trust necessary to conduct commerce over long distances. It is important to emphasise that the networks of trade fostered by chartered companies were not closed and exclusive, despite the mercantilist vision shared by many of the directors in London. Corporations regularly interacted with the private business networks forged by members of trading diasporas, and sometimes offered non-European merchants unique privileges to migrate to settlements administered by the company and conduct trade. This highlights that corporations were processes of negotiation with external constituencies; in this case, foreign merchants and their diasporic counterparts.

As well as being concerned with the profits generated by commercial activity, the autonomy of corporations from the oversight of the English state enabled overseas trading companies to maintain governmental interests overseas. The ambitions of the East India Company to rule over colonial territories, administrate people, and collect taxes, has led Philip Stern to define this organisation as a 'company-state'.² In the second part of this essay, it will be argued that a crucial way in which early modern trading corporations, including the East India Company, realised their governmental ambitions was by transporting free and unfree migrants to populate their colonial holdings. The global networks of exchange forged by overseas trading companies during the early modern period facilitated the movement of people over long distances, and directed migration flows to regions of Europe, America, Africa, and Asia which were of commercial interest to English merchants. By using their chartered monopolies to integrate these various colonial regions, and by successfully negotiating the competing interests of both the English state and non-European empires, corporate bodies were particularly effective in mobilising free planters, co-religionists, artisans, servants, slaves, and coolies to 'people' nascent English colonies and trading outposts. This demonstrates that the constitutional structure of corporate bodies, which enabled the sharing of capital and expertise to finance risky ventures, was a valuable tool for the establishment of an English empire in the early seventeenth century. Moreover, the dynamic

2 Philip Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Some historians have extended Stern's analysis to other overseas trading companies. For an example, see Edward Cavanagh, 'A Company with Sovereignty and Subjects of Its Own? The Case of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670–1763', *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* Vol. 26, No. 1 (2011).

approaches taken by corporate bodies towards empire-building encouraged experimentation and innovation. An inclination to learn from other European and non-European empires meant that corporations were particularly effective at inventing new methods to expand trade and stimulate migration. This proclivity for innovation can be explained by the overlapping membership of chartered companies, the regular turnover of shareholders sitting on the court of directors, and the appointment of men experienced in the operation of overseas empires to leading positions in the colonial government. By facilitating the movement of their employees overseas, corporate bodies played a crucial role in intensifying cross-cultural interactions between England and the wider world in the seventeenth century.

Corporations, Migration, and the Operation of Long Distance Trade in the Early Modern World

Migration and trade are two globalising forces that were closely linked in the pre-modern period. Limitations to transportation and communications technology meant that it was difficult for early societies to exchange commodities and ideas over long distances. There were risks associated with travelling into unfamiliar physical environments to conduct trade, and language barriers hindered commercial interactions. Nevertheless, the desire for lucrative goods motivated groups of merchants to devise novel methods for the management of long distance trade. Historians have identified some common and effective ways that early modern societies overcame the geographical, technological and cultural challenges to trading over long distances. The concept of 'diaspora' has enabled historians and sociologists to explain how merchants, who were linked with their business associates by a shared sense of ethnic or religious identity, settled in distant communities and brokered cross-cultural commerce.³ The dispersed members of trading diasporas acted as cultural intermediaries and formed complex mercantile networks that facilitated the

3 The idea of a voluntary 'trading diaspora' was first explored by the anthropologist Abner Cohen in 1971, who defined commercial networks of merchants in West Africa as a 'nation of socially interdependent, but spatially dispersed communities'; Abner Cohen, 'Cultural Strategies in the Organisation of Trading Diasporas', in Claude Meillassoux (ed.), *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa* (Oxford: Routledge, 1971). Philip Curtin demonstrated the richness of this concept by extending Cohen's analysis to include diverse examples from throughout world history; Philip Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

flow of commodities, capital, business information and intellectual ideas between component nodes. Across the world, pre-modern empires used these informal networks to organise long distance trade, and were dependent on members of the diaspora to complete commercial transactions with distant peoples on their behalf.⁴

Another technique that early modern societies used to overcome the technological limitations which hindered long distance trade, was to delegate sovereignty to a variety of privately funded corporations. By pooling their capital to form joint-stock companies, groups of merchants and gentry investors worked together to minimise the risks to personal wealth which came with conducting overseas ventures. It would appear that trading companies used vastly different methods to facilitate commerce when compared with diasporic communities. Unlike stateless trading diasporas, which contravened the claims of empires to monopolise trade by developing their own transnational networks, overseas trading companies actively sought to cultivate a close relationship with the state by securing royal charters, and defended their exclusive legal privileges to govern commerce with specific regions of the world. The East India Company, for example, devoted significant resources to securing charters from English monarchs and *farmans* from the Mughal emperor, constitutional documents which validated their permanent presence on the Indian coast and secured their future membership of the diverse commercial communities at Surat and Madras. As organisations with political and economic interests in both domestic and international spheres, state-backed companies remained successful by negotiating overlapping sovereignties and appeasing the various governments they came into contact with.

Nevertheless, the link between migration and trade was just as important for the successful operation of early modern corporations as it was for transnational diasporas. The primary concern of the enterprising merchants who supplied the capital necessary to establish joint-stock corporations was to make a significant return on their investments. To realise their ambitions, and to better

4 For examples, see Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (London: Yale University Press, 2009); Paul Lovejoy, 'The Role of the Wangara in the Economic Transformation of the Central Sudan in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries', *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 1978; Roquinaldo Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Atlantic World: Angola and Brazil during the Era of the Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Catia Antunes & Ribero Da Silva, Filipa, 'Cross-Cultural Entrepreneurship in the Atlantic: Africans, Dutch, and Sephardic Jews in Western Africa, 1580–1674', *Itinerario*, Vol. xxxv, No. 1, 2011; Francesca Trivellato & Leor Halevi & Catia Antunes (eds.), *Religion and Trade: Cross-Cultural Exchanges in World History, 1000–1900*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

manage their commercial affairs overseas, the administrative committees of chartered corporations paid experienced Englishmen to travel long distances and represent the company in foreign polities. By facilitating the movement of their employees overseas, and embedding them in non-European trading communities, corporations intensified cross-cultural exchange. Factors, ambassadors, and chaplains were dispatched to remote corners of the globe for the purpose of organising trade and sustaining an English commercial presence in the wider world. Some scholars have explored how the migration of factors, consuls, and chaplains overseas supported the commercial functions of English trading companies. For example, in *The Web of Empire*, Alison Games has described these individuals as ‘English cosmopolitans’, who made important contributions to the formation of the nascent English empire during the seventeenth century.⁵ This is the only comprehensive study of the different groups of people who travelled and migrated beyond the shores of England during the seventeenth century. However, there have been other more focused works which have also provided important insights into the lives of Englishmen who worked under the remit of specific companies.⁶

All English overseas trading companies sustained resident populations of merchants, known as factors, who lived and worked in various regions of the world. Factors employed by the Levant Company resided in the cosmopolitan trading communities of the eastern Mediterranean, while the Royal African Company dispatched their representatives to work in established commercial hubs on the West African Coast and also in prosperous port towns of the English Caribbean. The number of company employees who settled overseas was usually small. The largest Levant Company factory in Istanbul in 1649 contained thirty Englishmen, whereas the East India Company’s trading post in Japan housed only seven English factors when it was first established in 1613.⁷ The demographic impact of disease for those who lived in unfamiliar epidemiological environments during the seventeenth century was devastating, and this meant that English factors suffered high rates of attrition when working

5 Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion 1560–1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

6 For examples, see Miles Ogborn, *Global Lives: Britain and the World, 1550–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Sonia P. Anderson, *An English Consul in Turkey: Paul Rycout at Smyrna, 1667–1678* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); David Henige, ‘“Companies are always Ungrateful”: James Phipps of Cape Coast, A Victim of the African Trade’ *African Economic History*, No. 9 (1980); Geraldine M. Phipps, *Sir John Merrick: English Merchant-Diplomat in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Newtonville: Oriental Research Partners, 1983).

7 Alison Games, *The Web of Empire*, 102.

abroad. For instance, there were regular complaints that the 'greate mortality' among Englishmen at Fort Cormantine meant that the East India Company was dangerously low on personnel to conduct trade on the Gold Coast.⁸ Five factors, twelve carpenters and a bricklayer, were sent on the *Barbados Merchant* and the *Blackmore* in April 1660 to supplement the small contingent of English traders at Fort Cormantine.⁹ The following year an urgent request was made insisting that the Company send a doctor from London 'for the preservation of men's lives', after four Englishmen had died in the last month alone.¹⁰ There was a constant need for new personnel to migrate abroad if the population of factors at different trading outposts was to be sustained.

Factors were usually the younger sons or fee-paying apprentices of company members.¹¹ During their period of training, which generally lasted seven years, the young men working for the company abroad gained the business experience, linguistic skills, and diplomatic acumen that was necessary to prosper in the multifaceted world of early modern trade and exchange. Once junior factors had completed their apprenticeship, and had successfully demonstrated their ability to secure commissions through personal business connections, they would be invited to become fully-fledged members of an English trading firm or 'factory'. As factors, these men were paid a generous wage to organise trade, resolve commercial disputes, and provide political representation for the company. Evidence from the letters which were regularly dispatched between the court of directors in London and their factors working abroad, as well as the correspondence which circulated between factors working for the same company who lived at different locations overseas, offer historians an unparalleled insight into the daily lives of English merchants who migrated abroad. The correspondence of factors, which were a crucial means by which merchants living overseas sustained connections with business associates and gathered information about which commodities were profitable in European markets, demonstrates that, like trading diasporas, the sharing of business information and the maintenance of personal ties among members were important for chartered companies to trade long distances. Furthermore, the willingness of corporations to embrace forms of political and cultural accommodation allowed them to be very successful as commercial intermediaries.

8 Fort Cormantine to London, 4 July 1661, British Library, India Office Records (hereafter BL, IOR), E/3/27, f. 42.

9 London to Fort Cormantine, 12 April 1660, BL, IOR, E/3/85, ff. 308–311.

10 Fort Cormantine to London, August 1661, BL, IOR, E/3/27, f. 49.

11 Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550–1653* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 69.

Reciprocal gift-giving, written displays of deference to powerful kingdoms, intermarriage, and the adoption of local customs were the main methods through which the employees of trading companies and the members of trading diasporas thrived in cosmopolitan commercial communities. The directors of the East India Company were fully aware of the importance of maintaining amicable relationships with local rulers if they wanted to sustain their commercial presence in foreign polities, and therefore regularly instructed their factors to use policies of accommodation and supplication to facilitate cross-cultural commerce. For example, reports that there was a misunderstanding between the English and African merchants at Fort Cormantine caused the company to stress that 'no factor ... should give any offence to the king or his people'.¹²

Although membership of a company brought access to a network of commercial contacts across a variety of lucrative markets, the majority of factors who worked abroad for the company maintained their personal business contacts. Therefore, it is important to emphasise that overseas trading companies were not closed commercial networks. Many of the merchants and agents who worked for trading companies regularly subverted the instructions provided by the directors in London, by rejecting company authority, conducting commerce on their own private accounts, and directly supporting interloping activity. For instance, in a letter sent to factors at Fort Cormantine in November 1659 the directors of the East India Company expressed that 'it hath beene the custome of the English factors' to 'drive a trade and commerce' with interloping slave traders.¹³ Migrating overseas and working on distant shores meant that factors were often tempted by the prospect of embezzlement and contraband trade. Opportunistic factors working for the East India Company regularly participated in intra-Asian commerce, an informal network known colloquially as the 'country trade', which usually involved personal business transactions between English merchants and Asian brokers. Francesca Trivellato has used the example of the Sephardic firm Ergas and Silvera to emphasise that trading diasporas were not a series of closed and homogenous networks, as the coral and diamond trade which the business was involved in was dependent on the establishment of informal trading relationships with 'strangers' whom they had no cultural or religious common ground.¹⁴ In a similar manner, while corporations severely punished interlopers who challenged their monopolies in English courts, these companies often profited from their factors participating

12 Wyamba to London, 26 February 1659, E/3/25, BL, IOR, f. 283.

13 London to Fort Cormantine, 8 November 1659, BL, IOR, E/3/85, ff. 253–257.

14 Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 39.

in private commerce, and even developed interdependent relationships with non-European merchants.

Overseas trading companies and their factors regularly cooperated with members of foreign diasporas in the pursuit of greater commercial profits. This provides evidence for how some early modern corporations upheld the agency of non-European peoples. For example, as part of their efforts to make Madras 'a famous emporium of trade and a mart of nations' at the close of the seventeenth century, the East India Company granted distinctive privileges to Armenian merchants to encourage them to settle in the vicinity of Fort St. George.¹⁵ These Armenian traders were valuable to the company because they drove a global commerce in textiles and silver, integrating Manila and the Pacific into their expansive diasporic networks.¹⁶ In April 1690 the President and Council of Fort St. George confirmed that they would uphold the contract made between the East India Company and the Armenians who had travelled to London to petition the directors. They declared that the Armenian merchants at Madras would be 'invited to settle and trade here and live and be as free therein as any English'. To 'induce as many as possible of their nation to come and settle here with their families and estates', the Company ruled that members of the Armenian diaspora residing at Madras would be subject to the same customs duties as Englishmen, permitted to serve as factors, granted religious toleration, and able to serve as soldiers in the garrison.¹⁷ The company hoped that if the Armenians were 'justly dealt with', they would encourage a considerable growth in trade and industry, bringing 'into Madras to inhabit in a few years double the number of artificers which you have there already'.¹⁸ These policies demonstrate how overseas trading companies and their employees developed profitable relationships with trading diasporas, and facilitated the extension of diasporic networks into new regions and markets.

Over time, the collaborative relationship between corporations and diasporas in the Indian Ocean began to degenerate. By the mid-eighteenth century, Britain had begun to consolidate its power over Indian trade, as the East India

15 Vahé Baladouni and Margaret Makepeace, 'Armenian Merchants of the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries: English East India Company Sources', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series*, Vol. 88, No. 5 (1998), doc. 142.

16 Bhaswati Bhattacharya, 'Making money at the blessed place of Manila: Armenians in the Madras–Manila trade in the eighteenth century', *Journal of Global History*, Vol. 3, 2008.

17 Baladouni and Makepeace, 'Armenian Merchants of the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries', doc. 126; Bhattacharya, 'Making money at the blessed place of Manila', 6.

18 Baladouni and Makepeace, 'Armenian Merchants of the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries', doc. 143.

Company gradually transitioned from a trading firm with influence over local politics, to a more formal institution which held direct control over large territories in Bengal. The seizure of the merchant vessel *Santa Catharina* by the British navy and the ensuing trial in London demonstrated the waning power of the Armenian trading diaspora in India during the mid-eighteenth century. Affluent Armenian merchants were forcefully dispersed from New Julfa and Madras by foreign empires in 1746, leading to the collapse of their long distance trading networks. In the legal case over damages to property on the *Santa Catharina*, members of the Armenian diaspora were unable to challenge the military might, economic power and judicial expertise of the state-backed networks administered by their commercial rivals, the East India Company.¹⁹ Informal networks could not compete with the trade and military power that nation states and empires now wielded in foreign markets. Over time, the weak European imperial structures which had encouraged the proliferation of commercial companies and trading diasporas became much stronger. Consequently, by the late eighteenth century, the need for corporations and diasporas to perform intermediary commercial functions in host communities was rapidly declining.

Corporations and Religious Migration

Although living and working overseas could deepen cross-cultural understanding and encourage miscegenation, the directors of trading companies held real concerns about the moral conduct of factors, and the repercussions that misbehaviour could have on the wellbeing of their spiritual lives. In an attempt to ensure that their employees overseas remained pious while working overseas in multi-faith commercial hubs, and were not tempted to renounce their Protestant religion, trading companies regularly dispatched chaplains to serve English communities. Ministers were usually paid between £50 to £100 per annum to migrate to overseas factories and preside over baptisms, deliver sermons, and administer funeral rites.²⁰ For example, following the death of the English chaplain at Bombay, the East India Company dispatched his replacement, Richard Cobbe, on the *Catherine* in 1714. The directors of the company explained in an accompanying letter that they resolved to maintain at

19 Sebouh Aslanian, 'Trade Diaspora versus Colonial State: Armenian Merchants, the English East India Company, and the High Court of the Admiralty in London 1748–1752', *Diaspora*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2004: 83–85.

20 Games, *The Web of Empire*, 226.

least one minister in each of their overseas territories, and because reports suggested that Cobbe was a virtuous man, it was thought that he would be 'very useful to promote piety and virtue in the Island'. On top of their religious duties in the English trading community, the East India Company also expected that all ministers sent to reside in India should contribute towards conversion efforts. In order to 'instruct the Gentues or others that shall be servants or slaves of the company or of their agents in the Protestant religion', chaplains were required to have a firm knowledge of Portuguese within a year of their arrival in India, and were also encouraged to learn 'the native language of the country where they shall reside'.²¹

The career of the distinguished chaplain Edward Pocock can be used as an example for how the global networks of trading companies facilitated the migration of well-educated Protestant clergyman to company trading posts, contributed to the growth of intellectual enquiry about the non-European world, and also led to the dissemination of the Christian gospel. Pocock's MA qualification and his keen interest in studying foreign languages helps to explain why the Levant Company chose to employ him as their chaplain at Aleppo in 1629. The company's governor, Hugh Hamersley, explained that he had nominated Pocock for the position due to 'ability in learning, soundness in the study of divinity, conformity to the constitutions of the Church, and integrity of life and conversation'.²² While overseas Pocock was supported by a generous wage from the Levant Company, which allowed him to continue his intellectual endeavours, learning Arabic and translating major works of Islamic scholarship into English. The patronage of Archbishop Laud and his detailed knowledge of the languages and customs of the Ottoman Empire meant that upon his return to England, Pocock was appointed to the position of lecturer in Arabic at Oxford University.²³ Subsequent chaplains who worked for the Levant Company, such as John Covel who was appointed to the chaplaincy of the English embassy in Istanbul in 1670, shared Pocock's concern with the accumulation of knowledge.²⁴ The letters and diaries of these chaplains form an important body of source material for historians interested in contact between England

21 London to Bombay, 27 March 1714, BL IOR/E/3/98, ff. 173–174.

22 Quoted in Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, 294.

23 Games, *The Web of Empire*, 231–232. For more information on the chaplains employed by overseas trading companies, see Simon Mills, 'The English Chaplains at Aleppo: Exploration and Scholarship between England and the Ottoman Empire, 1620–1760', *Bulletin of the Council for British Research in the Levant*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (2011); J. B. Pearson, *Biographical Sketches of the Chaplains to the Levant Company, 1611–1706* (London: Deighton Bell, 1883).

24 J. Theodore Bent, 'The English in the Levant', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 5., No. 20, (Oct. 1890): 658–659.

and the Islamic world during the early modern period. They provide evidence for how corporations, and their agents overseas, functioned as intermediaries with Muslim states.

Missionary activity and the search for religious autonomy have always been driving forces behind long distance migration. During the seventeenth century the constitutional structure of joint-stock corporations proved flexible enough to facilitate both the migration of individual chaplains abroad and the large scale movement of whole congregations to the North American wilderness. For instance, to procure the funds necessary to finance the transportation of emigrants, co-religionists interested in English projects to colonise the Americas formed joint-stock corporations.²⁵ The Massachusetts Bay Company and its predecessors were associations established by members of nonconformist Protestant sects in the early seventeenth century. There is a large body of historical research which analyses how the Massachusetts Bay Company was particularly distinctive in the history of English joint-stock companies because many of its leading subscribers, who were known as freemen, made the decision in 1630 to migrate to New England along with other families who shared their religious confession.²⁶ These prominent freemen transferred the company's seat of government from England to their new colony, and in subsequent years would use their royal charter to develop Massachusetts as a godly republic.²⁷ The constitutional structure of joint-stock companies, which enabled members to share capital and resources, meant that these organisations were ideal for like-minded religious sects fleeing persecution to finance their migration overseas. Once viable settlements had been established in North America, the freemen of the Council of New England made the unprecedented decision to renounce their corporate charter to govern the colony in 1635.

It is estimated that between 17,000 and 21,000 puritan families arrived in New England as part of the Great Migration (1630–1641) initiated by members

25 William Robert Scott, *The Constitution and Finance of English, Scottish and Irish Joint-Stock Companies to 1720. Volume II Companies for Foreign Trade, Colonisation, Fishing and Mining* (Cambridge, MA: Cornell University Library, 1912), 306.

26 Frances Rose-Troup, *The Massachusetts Bay Company and Its Predecessors* (Grafton: Clearfield, 1930); T. H. Breen, *Puritans and Adventurers: Change and Persistence in Early America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

27 Michael Winship, 'Godly Republicanism and the Origins of the Massachusetts Polity', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 63, No. 3 (July 2006): 443–444; Paul Lucas, 'Colony or Commonwealth: Massachusetts Bay, 1661–1666', *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (January 1967); J. T. Peacey, 'Seasonable Treatises: A Godly Project of the 1630s', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 113, No. 452 (June 1998).

of the Massachusetts Bay Company.²⁸ Alison Games has used surviving port registers to show that 939 men, women and children left London to settle in the New England region in 1635. The mobility of this population group is demonstrated by the relatively high rate of migration out of Massachusetts Bay in the same year, when 530 people left the colony in search of opportunities elsewhere.²⁹ Investors in other English overseas ventures were keen to divert migration flows of godly families away from New England and to their own colonial enterprises.³⁰ For example, at the experimental colony of Providence Island, situated on the Miskito Coast of Central America, there were concerted efforts to attract pious colonists and skilled men destined for New England to this remote puritan settlement in the tropics. To encourage families to relocate from Massachusetts Bay, members of the Providence Island Company in London implemented new policies which offered immigrants prominent positions on the colonial council, generous land grants, and religious autonomy. Such efforts seem to have been relatively successful, with reports in 1638 suggesting 'diverse that were going to New England did now declare their willingness to goe to Providence', including the carpenter John Arrat and his family.³¹ In March 1641, shortly before the English were extirpated from the colony, the Providence Island Company made an agreement with Emmanuel Truebody for the transportation of 300 members of a large puritan congregation. These New England families would be given land at the proposed colony of Cape Gracias a Dios on the mainland of Central America.³² Although this major resettlement scheme was ultimately unsuccessful due to a Spanish invasion, such enterprising ventures demonstrate that some joint-stock companies were concerned with supplying their nascent overseas settlements with the labour necessary to accelerate the process of colonial development.

28 Stephen Innes, *Creating the Commonwealth: The Economic Culture of Puritan New England* (London: W.W. Norton & Co, 1995), 23.

29 Alison Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1999), 170–171.

30 Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World*, 133–138.

31 General Court for Providence 5 April 1638, Journal of the Governor and Company of Adventurers for the Plantation of the Island of Providence, The National Archives at Kew (hereafter TNA), CO 124/2, f. 166.

32 Karen Ordhal Kupperman, *Providence Island, 1630–1641: The Other Puritan Colony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 323–325, 336. For more on the Providence Island Company, see A. P. Newton, *The Colonising Activities of the English Puritans: The Last Phase of the Elizabethan Struggle with Spain* (New Jersey: Yale University Press, 1914).

Corporations and Labour Migration

As well as dispatching factors to organise long distance trade and establish speculative colonial projects, English corporations played a significant role in the international labour migration during the early modern period. Even though by the mid-seventeenth century the role of chartered companies in the colonisation of the Americas had become less significant, with only the Somers Islands Company surviving into the 1680s, corporations did play a crucial role in initiating colonial development earlier in the century by financing risky ventures and organising the migration of hundreds of colonists. For instance, to realise their governmental ambitions, chartered companies devised novel legal mechanisms to facilitate the movement of labourers over long distances to clear and cultivate colonial holdings. The high cost of the transatlantic voyage and the prospect of performing plantation work made free settlers reluctant to immigrate to the Americas during the early modern period.³³ Consequently, English merchants and colonial landowners, many of whom worked under the remit of corporations, resorted to the use of coercive techniques to facilitate migration.

In the British Atlantic world, contracts of indenture supplied colonial holdings in North America and the Caribbean with a cheap and malleable workforce. After the failure of initial efforts to find precious metals and exploit urbanised Indian societies in North America, the indenture system was developed in the early seventeenth century by the Virginia Company as an innovative tool to mobilise English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish labourers to travel to the nascent colonies in the Chesapeake Bay and work on tobacco plantations. Shareholders were to be granted an additional fifty acres of land for every servant or labourer they transported to Virginia, while emigrants who paid for their own passage also received the same fifty acre 'headright'.³⁴ English merchants and promoters, many of whom were employed as agents by chartered companies, used the indenture contract to fund the cost of the transatlantic passage for unskilled young males in exchange for three to five years work for a colonial master. Bernard Bailyn has established that the colonisation of British America was a process that involved the extension of established forms of rural mobility among unskilled workers within early modern English society.³⁵

33 David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 193.

34 Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1975), 94.

35 Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America* (New York: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 1987). See also Alison Games, 'Migration', in David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, eds.,

Promoters in the British Isles diverted internal migration flows away from London and towards colonial plantations. William O'Reilly has estimated that around 340,000 white migrants travelled to English holdings in North America and the Caribbean before 1680, and that around three-quarters of these migrants were indentured labourers.³⁶ Exposure to rigorous work regimes and hostile disease environments generated high mortality rates within the servant population, with as many as forty percent dying soon after their arrival during the early seventeenth century.³⁷ Although many of these servants were transported by chartered companies, such as the Virginia Company, the Somers Islands Company and the Providence Island Company, it is important to stress that a large number of indenture contracts were financed by merchants who worked independently from corporate oversight.

Corporations valued indentured labourers both for their contribution to economic productivity as plantation workers and their ability to enhance population growth and transplant European cultural norms as free settlers after their contracts had expired.³⁸ The *Second Charter of the Virginia Company* (1609) demonstrates the dual purpose of the indenture system. Although the Virginia Company was primarily a private commercial venture that desired indentured servants for their cheap labour, there were also secondary imperial motives 'to make habitacion and plantacion of sondrie of oure people in that parte of America comonlie called Virginia'.³⁹ Promotional material published by chartered companies also provides evidence for the importance of labour migration to early colonial enterprises. For example, the Virginia Company explained that 'for the better settling of the Colony and Plantation in Virginia' they desired 'labouring men and women'. Even though a large proportion of these labourers travelled under contracts of indenture, those with the means to

The British Atlantic World 2nd ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Henry A. Gemery, 'Markets for migrants: English indentured servitude and emigration in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', in Emmer, P. C., ed., *Colonialism and Migration; Indentured Labour Before and After Slavery* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1986), 33.

36 William, O'Reilly 'Movements in the Atlantic World', in Nicholas Canny and Phillip Morgan eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World: 1450–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 315–318.

37 O'Reilly 'Movements in the Atlantic World', 316.

38 In fact, as Christopher Tomlins emphasises, although the indenture system provided the labour power needed to kick-start colonial ventures in North America, by the time that these colonies moved towards self-sustained growth in the late seventeenth century, free labour in household units had begun to predominate. See Christopher Tomlins, *Freedom Bound: Law, Labor, and Civic Identity in Colonising English America, 1580–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 64–65.

39 *The Second Charter of the Virginia Company* (1609).

fund their own travel across the Atlantic were encouraged to purchase a share in the company at £12 10 shillings and prepare for their new life in Virginia, where they were promised 'houses to dwell in, with Gardens and Orchards, and also foode and clothing at the comon charge of the Joynt Stocke'. Individuals who possessed the knowledge of the seventeen different skilled trades listed in the pamphlet, including 'Smiths, Carpenters, Coopers ... [and] Mettell-men of all sorts', were considered to be especially important for the future prosperity of the young colony.⁴⁰ The Virginia Company was not particularly successful in filling its vessels with the great variety of specialised craftsmen identified in these early promotional pamphlets. Edmund Morgan contends that having a large population of skilled artisans, who were unwilling to perform agricultural labour, may have even exacerbated the demographic disaster unfolding at the struggling colony.⁴¹ In addition to their colonisation efforts on the North American mainland, the Virginia Company also made important contributions to the settlement of Bermuda. Michael Jarvis has detailed how early printed accounts of Bermuda, which emphasised that there were 'swarmes of people desir[ing] to be transported there', including gentlemen, artisans and ministers, helped the company to dispatch six hundred settlers in nine ships to the island between 1612 and 1615.⁴² The Somers Islands Company, a joint stock venture formed as an offshoot of the Virginia Company in 1615, shared its predecessor's interest in fostering colonial development on Bermuda through the transportation of free and unfree migrants. In the five years following Richard Norwood's 1616 land survey, around 1100 free settlers poured into Bermuda with their families, the majority of whom worked as tenants and were contractually obliged to pay to their landlords half of the tobacco they grew as rent.⁴³

The demand for plantation labourers in the Caribbean colonies was not satisfied by the indenture system. English servants preferred to serve their indenture in North America, where there was more available land for free settlers and where there was less negative publicity in England emphasising the excessive mortality rates resulting from brutal labour regimes and tropical ailments.⁴⁴ By the late 1640s, the reduced cost of African slaves encouraged English planters

40 The Virginia Company of London, *For the Plantation in Virginia. Or Nova Britannia* (1609). Accessed on Early English Books Online (EEBO).

41 Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal Of Colonial Virginia* (London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1975), 85–86.

42 Michael Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians, and the Maritime Atlantic World, 1680–1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 17.

43 Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 22–24.

44 David Galenson, 'The Rise and Fall of Indentured Servitude in the Americas: An Economic Analysis', *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 1984: 11.

on Barbados to increase their participation in the transatlantic slave trade and to reallocate the agricultural and skilled industrial work associated with sugar production from white indentured servants to slaves.⁴⁵ The Royal African Company and the South Sea Company were trading companies formed specifically to facilitate the forced migration of African slaves to plantation economies in the Americas. The Royal African Company held a chartered monopoly over West African trade from 1672, and provisioned the plantation economies of the English Caribbean with the slaves needed for agricultural labour and the dangerous work associated with the industrial refinement of sugar cane. William Pettigrew has shown that, by the early 1720s, the Royal African Company had transported nearly 150,000 enslaved Africans across the Atlantic, and had thoroughly altered the dynamics of European slaving by increasing the English share in the transatlantic slave trade from 33% in 1673 to 74% in 1683.⁴⁶ Furthermore, under the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht, which ended the War of Spanish Succession in 1713, the South Sea Company was granted the *asiento* monopoly contract to supply Spanish America with 4,800 African slaves every year.⁴⁷ There was a strong demand for African slaves in South America due to the labour intensive silver mining industry and legal rulings dating back to the sixteenth century which restricted the ability of Spanish colonists to enslave and exploit Amerindians. The South Sea Company was relatively successful in its slave trading ventures, particularly because access to the highly protected Spanish American market provided lucrative opportunities for contraband trade in commodities other than slaves. It is estimated that between 1715 and 1739 the company disembarked around 30,000 African slaves in Spanish America, and even continued to regularly supply colonial Spaniards with forced labour after the infamous commercial bubble in 1720.⁴⁸

45 Galenson, 'The Rise and Fall of Indentured Servitude in the Americas', 11.

46 William Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt: The Royal African Company and the Politics of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1672–1752* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 11. For other studies which explore the role of the Royal African Company in the British slave trade, see Kenneth G. Davies, *The Royal African Company* (London: Longmans, 1957); David W. Galenson, *Traders, Planters and Slaves: Market Behavior in Early English America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Abigail Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire: Labor, Slavery, and the Origins of the British Atlantic Empire*, (New Jersey: Yale University Press, 2015); Gregory E. O'Malley, *Final Passages: The Intercolonial Slave Trade of British America, 1619–1807* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

47 Victoria Sorsby, *English Trade with Spanish America under the Asiento 1713–1740* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, UCL 1975).

48 Helen Paul, 'The South Sea Company's Slave Trading Activities', paper presented at the Economic History Society Conference, 2004.

Along with moving enslaved Africans between continents, the Royal African Company utilised a workforce of white indentured servants and black slaves at the English trading factories which lined the Gold Coast. The role of English corporations in mobilising slaves on plantations and using forced labour in urban occupations has been understated in the historiography of early modern colonialism. Simon Newman contends that interactions between English labour traditions and West African slavery produced a hybrid form of 'castle slavery' at these trading posts during the eighteenth century.⁴⁹ He has explained how it became common practice during the late seventeenth century for the Royal African Company to transport slaves from Upper Guinea to the forts owned by the company on the Gold Coast. Many of these 'castle slaves' were trained as skilled artisans in crafts such as carpentry, bricklaying, masonry or smithing, and were ordered by the company to help repair the fort and maintain the infrastructure of English trading operations in West Africa. Particularly important for the continued success of English slave trading commerce on the Gold Coast was the role that company slaves played in the local maritime sector. The Royal African Company valued slaves that possessed nautical skills, who they forced to navigate the dangerous Atlantic surf in canoes to assist in the transportation of valuable cargoes and enable communication between English shipping and Cape Coast Castle.⁵⁰ The prevalence of epidemic diseases on the Gold Coast to which English soldiers had little acquired immunity also led the company to sometimes use male castle slaves as a militia force to protect English interests against European competitors and African encroachment.

In a similar manner, the employees of the East India Company also deployed forced labour at the company's network of fortified trading outposts which spanned the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. The labour power of slaves, coolies, and soldiers helped to construct and sustain the 'company-state' described by Philip Stern.⁵¹ Richard Allen has shown how the East India Company commissioned a series of large scale and risky slave trading voyages to resolve the labour shortages at St. Helena and Bencoolen.⁵² Captain Thomas

49 Simon Newman, *A New World of Labor: The Development of Plantation Slavery in the British Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

50 Newman, *A New World of Labor*, 146–150.

51 Stern, *The Company-State*.

52 Richard Allen, *European Slave Trading in the Indian Ocean, 1500–1850*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015). For more on the slave trading activities of the East India Company in the seventeenth century, see Michael D. Bennett, *The East India Company, Transnational Interactions, and the Formation of Forced Labour Regimes* (Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Kent, 2016); Kevin McDonald, *Pirates, Merchants, Settlers, and Slaves: Colonial America and the Indo-Atlantic World* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015),

Sitwell was instructed to supply 60 slaves to St. Helena, while in the winter of 1713 the *Mercury Sloop* delivered 43 Guinea slaves of ‘the same kind [that] are often carried to the West Indies’ to planters on the island.⁵³ In March 1715 five more merchant vessels were licensed to transport “sound healthful and merchantable slaves natives of Madagascar, two thirds males one third females, none of them under sixteen or above thirty years of age” to St. Helena.⁵⁴ To provision Bencoolen with even more slaves, the *Sarum* was sent to Nias, a large island just off the coast of western Sumatra, to procure 112 labourers for 90 to 100 dollars each.⁵⁵ Slaves from Nias were reportedly a “very dextrous people” that “readily take to any handicraft”, and soon after their arrival several were already employed as carpenters.⁵⁶ Between 1713 and 1714, the *Arabella* and the *Clapham* visited Madagascar on their voyages to the East Indies and delivered a total of 346 slaves to Bencoolen.⁵⁷ Over subsequent years St. Helena and Bencoolen were regularly supplied with slaves, either through large scale slave trading voyages financed by the East India Company or via illicit commerce with private merchants. Soldiers with a range of different backgrounds, including those of European descent and mixed Indo-Portuguese ancestry, were also dispatched to serve at company colonies, where they protected prosperous trading communities in the Indian Ocean from rival encroachments.⁵⁸ At Bombay, the East India Company developed conciliatory policies, including generous food allowances, to try and attract coolies and skilled weavers from the Indian Subcontinent to immigrate to their island colony.⁵⁹ Such pioneering projects to accelerate economic development and the process of ‘peopling’

especially 99–122; Virginia Bever Platt, ‘The East India Company and the Madagascar Slave Trade’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 4, (October 1969): 548–577; James Armstrong, ‘Madagascar and the Slave Trade in the Seventeenth Century’, *Omalysy Anio*, (1983–84): 211–233; Frenise A. Logan, ‘The British East India Company and African Slavery in Benkulen, Sumatra, 1687–1792’, *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 41, No. 4, (October 1956): 339–348.

53 London to St. Helena sent by a sloop of Mr Sitwell’s, 16 October 1713, BL, IOR, E/3/98, f. 57; London to St. Helena, 4 February 1714/15, BL, IOR, E/3/98, f. 269; London to St. Helena, 14 March 1715/16, BL, IOR, E/3/98, f. 427.

54 London to St. Helena, 14 March 1715/16, BL, IOR, E/3/98, ff. 428–429.

55 Bencoolen to London, 1 February 1704/05, BL, IOR, G/35/7, f. 10; London to Bencoolen, BL, IOR, E/3/95, 3 July 1706, f. 293.

56 Bencoolen to London, 1 February 1704/05, BL, IOR, G/35/6, f. 1.

57 Allen, *European Slave Trading in the Indian Ocean*, p. 34.

58 Philip Stern, ‘Soldier and Citizen in the Seventeenth-Century English East India Company’, *Journal of Early Modern History*, Vol. 15, No. 1, (2011).

59 Bennett, *The East India Company, Transnational Interactions, and the Formation of Forced Labour Regimes*, Chapter 2.

English colonies seem to have been a common feature of all overseas trading companies which operated in the seventeenth century.

Corporations, Migration, and Innovation in the Colonial Sphere

The records of chartered companies reveal that these organisations were particularly interested in trialling innovative colonial projects, even if these ventures were usually unsuccessful. The migration of skilled people and transfers of transnational expertise were important in fostering these experimental endeavours. Ideas about commercial and agricultural ‘improvement’ became a central feature of English discourse over the course of the seventeenth century. Paul Slack has studied the importance of these intellectual discussions within the metropole, however, the language of ‘improvement’ was also frequently used by adventurers and merchants with reference to English colonial designs in Ireland and America.⁶⁰ In their instructions to their employees overseas the directors of trading companies regularly used such terminology to stress how agricultural experimentation and technological innovation could hasten colonial development at overseas plantations. Throughout the 1620s the Virginia Company was searching for profitable export commodities, and was therefore concerned with the ‘setting up of silke works, and planting of vines in Virginia’. In an effort to stimulate this potentially lucrative enterprise, the Virginia Company transported numerous French experts knowledgeable in the planting of Mulberry trees from the province of Languedoc, and also sent over to the colony ‘a treatise of the art of making silke’ written by the Frenchman John Bonoil.⁶¹ Moreover, as part of the search for economic self-sufficiency at their short-lived puritan colony, the gentry investors who managed the Providence Island Company also initiated a variety of experimental projects. In 1633 the Providence Island Company dispatched Richard Lane, who was an expert in the planting of madder (a dye used in the English textile industry), to supervise the establishment of a new industry on the island. Lane was given extensive instructions detailing how he was to ‘teach his skill in planting and ordering of madder’ to the settlers and to ‘dispenche his plants and seeds to any of the

60 Paul Slack, *The Invention of Improvement: Information and Material Progress in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 66–71.

61 John Bonoil, ‘His Majesties gracious letter to the Earle of South-Hampton, treasurer, and to the Councell and Company of Virginia heere: commanding the present setting up of silke works, and planting of vines in Virginia ...’ (London, 1622), ff. 2–3.

inhabitants thereof'.⁶² The directors of the East India Company also fostered a number of innovative enterprises in their attempts to render the strategic settlements of St. Helena and Bencoolen more profitable. High wages were offered to encourage men with experience in the management of slaves and the cultivation of tropical commodities to emigrate from the Caribbean, and supervise the company's efforts to establish plantation slavery in the South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean during the 1680s.⁶³

The pioneering role of corporate bodies in the development of colonial enterprise during the seventeenth century can be explained by cross-institutional ties in the City of London and the overlapping membership of chartered companies. Novel ideas about the management of trade, the cultivation of valuable commodities, and the mobilisation of forced labour were shared by merchants and planters who invested in multiple corporations and operated in different geographical regions. As constituents of various trading companies and overseas ventures interacted in social spaces, such as church congregations, expertise was spread among members of the commercial community and the landed gentry, informing the direction of colonial policy pursued by corporate institutions.⁶⁴ Furthermore, the constitutional and governmental structure of corporations, which encouraged the regular changeover of members, enabled policies relating to labour and migration to constantly evolve and be re-shaped to better suit the shifting economic and geopolitical circumstances of the early modern world. By tracing the career tracks of colonial governors in the seventeenth century English Atlantic world it is possible to find evidence that shows how the directors of trading companies placed a high value on prior experience when hiring men to govern their overseas enterprises. For example, the uncompromising colonial leader Phillip Bell served as the governor of Bermuda with the Somers Islands Company, before being hired as the governor of Providence Island in 1631. The Providence Island Company explained that they trusted Bell's decision-making because of his 'owne skill and experience in this business', which meant that he would 'in all thinge doe that which you conceive fittest for advancement of this worke'.⁶⁵ It was during Bell's tenure

62 Journal of the Governor and Company of Adventurers for the Plantation of the Island of Providence, General Court, 15 February 1632/33, TNA CO 124/2, f. 43; Kupperman, *Providence Island, 1630–1641*, 84–86, 91.

63 Bennett, *The East India Company, Transnational Interactions, and the Formation of Forced Labour Regimes*, Chapter 3.

64 Edmond Smith, *The Networks of the East India Company in Early Modern London, c. 1599–1625*, PhD thesis, (Cambridge, 2015).

65 Letter to Captain Phillip Bell, 7 February 1630, TNA, CO 124/1, f. 21.

that Englishmen on Providence Island began to move away from the use of indentured servants and to instead exploit the labour of African slaves at a large scale. This has led Alison Games to question whether Philip Bell helped to transplant the expertise and institutions necessary to precipitate a similar transition in his subsequent position as governor of Barbados between 1641 and 1650.⁶⁶ Nathaniel Butler was also hired as governor by both the Providence Island Company and the Somers Islands Company, while the prodigious Caribbean planter Thomas Modyford served as the Barbados factor for the Royal African Company in the early 1660s, before immigrating to Jamaica where he would later become governor.⁶⁷ Being appointed to prominent positions in the colonial government by multiple companies helped individuals to advance their career, while also supporting the transfer of useful knowledge and institutions between colonies.

Conclusion

Studying the role that corporations played in facilitating the movement of people across the world offers important insights into the global history of migration and the history of early modern colonialism. It provides evidence that, during the seventeenth century, trading diasporas and corporate bodies were both transnational organisations that used similar methods to surmount the technological barriers which hindered the establishment of global trade networks. Although most scholars have placed trading diasporas and chartered companies in opposition, by virtue of the fact that diasporic communities were decentralised and early modern corporations were an extension of state power, this essay has aimed to show that both trading diasporas and chartered companies devised comparable methods to organise long distance trade. In an era when limitations to communications technology meant that correspondence could take months to arrive, it was important for trading diasporas and overseas trading companies to dispatch experienced and trustworthy members of their community to distant shores to manage their commercial affairs. In order to facilitate cross-cultural exchange in an unfamiliar environment, the members of trading diasporas and the factors working for chartered companies adopted the customs of foreign societies and assumed hybrid identities. Most historians who have studied early modern trading diasporas, including

66 Games, *The Web of Empire*, 151–152.

67 For Nathaniel Butler, see Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World*, 36–37. For Thomas Modyford, see Galenson, *Traders, Planters and Slaves*, 28.

Philip Curtin and Francesca Trivellato, contend that a shared sense of ethnicity, family, and religion were the most important ways in which connections between members of the diaspora were sustained. Although English overseas trading companies were concerned with ensuring that their factors working abroad continued to practice the Protestant faith, even going to the expense of dispatching ministers to administer religious rites, this essay has suggested that in corporate organisations a shared membership of the company and access to its communication channels were the most important ways that the trust necessary to facilitate long distance trade was fostered. In some cases, such as the example of the Armenian merchants at Madras, overseas trading companies and diasporas collaborated in the pursuit of shared profits.

The global networks of migration forged by overseas trading companies also demonstrate that English corporations made a foundational contribution to the process of colonial development in the Americas and the East Indies. For instance, the constitutional structure of corporate bodies enabled co-religionists to share capital and expertise in their search for religious autonomy overseas. Indentured servants were shipped overseas by corporations such as the Virginia Company and the Somers Islands Company, where they cleared the land and cultivated tropical commodities. Some chartered companies, such as the Royal African Company and the South Sea Company, were formed to administer the African slave trade. Even the East India Company participated in slave trading commerce to populate their nascent colonies in the South Atlantic and Indian Ocean with a malleable labour force. This 'company-state' was concerned as much with administering territory and governing people as it was with commerce. Furthermore, this essay has also argued that the colonial policies formulated by corporations, especially those which related to migration and the cultivation of new commodities, were experimental and pioneering. It has been suggested that the innovative nature of corporate bodies can be explained by the overlapping membership of chartered companies, the regular turnover of shareholders sitting on the court of directors, and the appointment of men experienced in the operation of overseas empires to leading positions in the colonial government.

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