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Denmark's Veiled Role in Slavery in the Americas

The Impact of the Danish West Indies on the Transatlantic Slave Trade

Scott A. Stawski

A Thesis in the Field of History

for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

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Abstract

The legacy of Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade is presented as that of a minor player in the practice who had an oversized positive influence on abolishing the slave trade. The current historiography estimates that Danish participation was less than 1% of the 12 million enslaved Africans transported to the Americas from 1501 to 1880. Through various grants of rights and privileges, Danish slaves were provided a better quality of life than their counterparts. In 1792, Denmark became the first colonial power to abolish their participation by announcing an end to the practice in 1803 and setting a standard for all colonial powers to follow. The results of the research and reported in this thesis shows this historiography to be inaccurate as to historical quantification and misleading as to historical legacy. New data is available on the scale of Danish participation. By applying a more informed paradigm to the empirical data, Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade is six times the scale of what has been historically reported making Denmark the fifth largest slave-trading nation within the Americas. This new historical quantification coupled with an analysis of the underlying rationale for Denmark's abolition of their participation in the slave trade suggests a different historical legacy for Denmark than what is currently promulgated.

Author's Biographical Sketch

Scott Stawski is Global Vice President and Managing Director for DXC Technology. In his role, Scott is responsible for managing the sales and revenue generation activities for the $3.5B applications services business unit globally. Before his current role, Scott was America's Vice President of Sales for the automotive, manufacturing, and aerospace and defense sectors.

In the fall of 2015, Scott's first book was published by Pearson FT Press; *Inflection Point: How the Convergence of Cloud, Data, and Mobility Will Shape the Future of Business.* His second book, *Mandate Driven Leadership*, is being published by McGraw-Hill in the spring of 2019. He is also a contributing writer for TheStreet.com and SeekingAlpha.com as well as a speaker and facilitator at many of the leading industry shows and conferences.

Scott is Secretary, Board Member for the Celina Economic Development Corporation where he consults on the Gigabit City initiative in North Texas. He is active with ChildFund International and Shakespeare Dallas. He is also on the Board of Advisors for Southern Methodist University's Creative Coding and Visualization Program. Scott attended the College of William and Mary for three years and received his Bachelor of Liberal Arts from Thomas Edison State University. He is currently completing his Master of Liberal Arts, Extension Studies in History from Harvard University in Cambridge.

Dedication

Dedicated to my wife, Hope, and son, Henry, whom share my curiosity about the world and the diverse and inspirational community that today are proud to make the United States Virgin Islands their home.

Acknowledgments

To family, friends, co-workers, and academics who have assisted him in numerous ways, the author wishes to express his gratitude.

To his wife Hope and his son Henry who have tolerated his many late nights and weekends of research and writing, their support and encouragement have never been ending.

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I

Introduction

In 1673, the first Danish ships arrived in Port Taphus (renamed Charlotte Amalie in 1730[1]), Danish West Indies with 102 enslaved Africans. Shortly after that, Denmark's slave ports on the west coast of Africa were utilizing the Danish West Indies as the primary Danish port of entry into the Americas for enslaved Africans.[2] When an individual performs quick research on the transatlantic slave trade, Denmark is listed 7th in number of slaves embarked to the Americas; 111,040 from the years 1501 through 1875 out of 12.5 million embarked.[3] An often-cited published claim is that the Danish West Indies was home to "the largest slave auctions in the world."[4] Prima facie, these two statements seem contradictory. While there has been much academic work on the overall Transatlantic slave trade as well as research on the role of Portugal, Spain, and Great Britain, there has been less scholarly attention paid to the role of Denmark.

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[1] Harry S. Pariser, *Adventure Guide to the Virgin Islands* (Edison, NJ: Hunter, 1994), 20.

[2] Waldemar Westergaard, *The Danish West Indies under Company Rule (1671–1754): With a Supplementary Chapter, 1755–1917* (New York: Macmillan, 1917), 48.

[3] "Voyages – The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database," Emory University, accessed June 23, 2018, http://www.slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates.

[4] John Jordan, *Born Black in the U.S.A.* (Pittsburgh: Rosedog Books, 2014), 49.

It is the objective of this research to establish that the Danish were much more prolific in establishing, promoting, participating, and profiting in the transatlantic slave trade from the late seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth century than the current historiography suggests. Utilizing primary data only recently available, this analysis indicates that Denmark was integral to the embarkation or disembarkation of more than 600,000 African slaves to the Americas from 1671 until 1825 making Denmark, not the 7th but the 5th largest slave-trading nation only surpassed by Portugal, Great Britain, and France. The Danish built a successful slave trade business model; slave forts on the west coast of Africa for embarkation and a New World port of entry and slave market site for disembarkation at Charlotte Amalie, Danish West Indies. While initially, the Danish West Indies was the exclusive disembarkation point for Danish-flagged slave merchants, Denmark soon directly supported other slave trading nations including Great Britain, Spain, France, and the Netherlands by opening its port of entry into the Americas to these nations. The Danish West Indies became the most significant open, neutral slave trading port for multiple nations as well as independent and sometimes illegal slave merchants.[5]

This thesis will address the following questions:

1. How many slaves were the Danish responsible for embarking from Africa?
2. How many slaves did Danish flagged slave merchants disembark in the Danish West Indies?

[5] Jens Vibæk, *Danish West Indies 1755-1848: The Greatness of the West Indies* (Copenhagen: Fremad, 1966), 56-58.

3. How many total slaves disembarked in the Danish West Indies?
4. How many slaves were routed through the Danish West Indies to a subsequent disembarkation port?
5. What was the economic impact of the slave trade for Denmark?

This research project utilizes both secondary and primary sources. For the secondary sources, I rely on the perspective of learned individuals and past research that has most shaped the view of Danish participation and influence in the Transatlantic slave trade including books, journal articles, research reports and published studies. A bibliography review of these secondary sources show that there are benefits to reviewing them in three distinct segments; works by Danish authors, authors with direct ties to the Danish West Indies and authors with no cultural ties to either.

For the primary sources, I rely on documents and data on this topic archived at the Danish National Archives in Copenhagen, The U.S. National Archives and Record Administration in Washington, the Voyages database – a collection of archival data on 36,000+ slave-trading voyages maintained by Emory University and several collections archived at the Virgin Islands Public Library System in St. Thomas and St. Croix. The Danish West Indies territorial archive housed at the Danish National Archives has only recently been digitized, electronically indexed and available since March 1, 2017. These primary sources are a source of both new and more accurate quantitative data.

It is arguable that the Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade has received the least amount of academic attention of the major colonial powers. The scholar Daniel Hopkins notes “it is not commonly known that Denmark ever had any part in the history of Africa” even though “the Danes sailed the same seas, traded in the same commodities, and entertained much the same imperial ambitions as the Spanish, the

Portuguese, the British and the Dutch."[6] It can be argued that the language barrier created by the historical documents, which are primarily in Danish, and a research community, which primarily operates in English, is one reason for this lack of research and understanding.[7] Much of the primary data has been difficult to access and analyze since the data is in the Danish language and scattered in various international locations. When the United States purchased the Danish West Indies from Denmark in 1917, little attention was given to archiving the colonial records. Immediately after the purchase, Danish archivists visited the island, and with little debate or obstruction from the U.S. administrators, they removed the vast majority of historical records and sent them to Denmark to be stored in the Danish National Archives. The U.S. held little interest in the records until the establishment of the U.S. National Archives in the 1930s. At that time, an archivist was sent to the now renamed United States Virgin Islands and shipped any remaining records to the U.S. National Archives in Washington.[8]

As a result, "The native population of the Virgin Islands, primarily former colonials whose ancestors were brought from Africa as slaves, were left without access to the written sources that comprised their history."[9]

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[6] Daniel Hopkins, *Peter Thonning and Denmark's Guinea Commission* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 1.

[7] Niklas Thode and Gunvor Simonsen. "Introduction: The Historiography of Slavery in the Danish-Norwegian West Indies, C. 1950-2016," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 41, no. 4-5 (2016): 475-94.

[8] Jeannette Bastian, ""A Question of Custody: The Case of the Archives of the United States Virgin Islands."," *American Archivist* 64, no. 1 (2001): 96-114.

[9] Bastian, "A Question of Custody," 96.

This research is significant as it presents and analyzes new quantitative data leading to a deeper understanding of the historical accuracy and the resultant accountability of Denmark's participation in the transatlantic slave trade.

First, the primary sources used in this research include the original records of slave shipments, shipment manifests, auctions, related payments and inventory that are in several different languages including Danish, English, and Dutch. The recent electronic archiving of this data allows us to bring a higher degree of accuracy to the historical record and provides a more comprehensive view of the complex slave trade inter-relationships and economics involved.

Second, Denmark is most often cited in academic work as the colonial power that had the least participation in the slave trade, responsible for the shipment of roughly 110,000 African slaves to the Americas out of an estimated 12.5 million in total. Denmark is also given credit as the first colonial power to abolish participation in the slave trade in 1803.[10] This portrayal veils Denmark's much deeper involvement in establishing, promoting, participating in, and profiting from the slave trade. Like Marcus Garvey, a proponent of Black Nationalism, stated, "A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots."[11]

Lastly, the impact on Denmark's recognition of its accountability is significant. The USVI in 2017 celebrated the centennial of Denmark's sale of the Danish West Indies to the United States. That centennial has sparked a renewed interest in the discussion of

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[10] Westergaard, *Danish West Indies under Company Rule*, 128.

[11] Burrow Rufus, Jr., *James H. Cone and Black Liberation Theology* (Chicago: McFarland, 1994), 21.

Denmark issuing an official apology for its role in the transatlantic slave trade as well as a discussion of possible reparations.

In 1999 ACCRA, the African-Caribbean Reparations Resettlement Alliance first made a claim for reparations from Denmark for their participation in the transatlantic slave trade.[12] In 2013, CARICOM (CARIbbean COMmunity – an organization of fifteen Caribbean nations) initiated a Reparations Commission. "The Plan identified important components of reparations, such as the official recognition of the (historical) wrong and financial support for initiatives to redress legacies of injustice." While the USVI maintains significant historical and cultural ties to Denmark, the sale of the colony in 1917 to the United States for $25 million in gold allowed Denmark to extract itself from the colonies without dealing with the continued economic and social problems felt on the islands to this day as a result of the impact of the Danish slave trade. "The conditions of enslavement continue to form a central touchstone in the collective memory of Virgin Islanders.[13]

[12] Astrid Nombo Andersen, "We Have Reconquered the Islands": Figurations in Public Memories of Slavery and Colonialism in Denmark 1948–2012," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 26, no. 1 (2013): 73.

[13] Bastian, "A Question of Custody," 100.

II

Definition of Terms

Brandenburg Africa Company (BAC): Established in May 1682 by Elector Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg. The trading company charter was to promote Brandenburg's economic interests overseas by participating in the transatlantic triangular trade route that had enriched other colonial powers. The company operated out of the Großfriedrichsburg location on the west coast of Africa for nearly four decades. The BAC was known by various names depending on the date; the Electoral Brandenburg African Company, the Emden Company, and once Friedrich Wilhelm declared himself "King in Prussia" in 1701; the Royal Prussian African Company.

Danish Gold Coast: The Danish Gold Coast refers to the slave forts, lodges or geographic areas controlled by the Kingdom of Denmark-Norway in Africa and utilized by Denmark in the transatlantic slave trade. In what is now present-day southeast Ghana, the Danish Gold Coast's primary establishment were Fort Christiansborg, Fort Fredensborg, Fort Prinzenstein, Fort Kongensten and Fort Augustaborg.

Danish West Indies: The Danish West Indies consist primarily of the islands now named St. Thomas, St. John, St. Croix, Haskell Island and Water Island. They are also sometimes referred to as the Danish Antilles or the Danish-Norwegian West Indies. The Danish sold these islands to the United States in 1917, and they are now referred to as the United States Virgin Islands (USVI).

Denmark: The Kingdom of Demark-Norway also known as the Oldenburg Monarchy consisted of the Kingdom of Denmark, the Kingdom of Norway and the

German territories the Duchy of Schleswig and the Duchy of Holstein. When Denmark is referenced in this thesis, the intent is to refer to all lands controlled by the Oldenburg Monarchy during this period.

Disembarked: The port where an African slave enters the Americas. For purposes of this research, this would be the final port of entry into the Americas and would exclude a slave merchant ship's stopover and re-routing to the final destination.

Embarked: The port where an African slave is forcibly removed from the continent of Africa.

Royal Chartered Danish West India and Guinea Company: The official name of the company chartered by the Danish crown in 1671. It included the assets of the Danish Africa Company. It was later renamed the West India Guinea Company. It is often merely referred to as the Danish West India Company.

Slave trade: For purposes of this research, the slave trade is specific to the transatlantic slave trade from Africa to the Americas from the period of 1501 to 1875.

Triangular trade: In the colonial period, the general trading route between a European nation, its African colonies, and its Americas colonies. The term is used to explain the economics of European colonial powers transporting African slaves from Africa to the Americas colonies, and selling or trading those slaves in the Americas for goods, usually sugar, rum or tobacco. Then, the return of those goods to Europe for sale at a profit and using portions of that profit to buy European products to take to Africa to purchase or trade for African slaves completing the triangle of trade.

III

Established Historiography of Danish Participation in the Transatlantic Slave Trade

Slavery, the commodification, and trade of human beings, has been a dark but integral part of the shared human history. Starting from the 15th century, documented slave trade routes have existed; transporting slaves for labor in coffee, sugar cane, cotton, and tobacco plantations. The three major recorded slave routes are the transatlantic slave trade route, the trans-Saharan slave trade route, and the Indian Ocean slave trade route[14]. While slavery in some form has existed throughout human history, the large-scale enslavement and transportation of people coincide with the arrival of Europeans in mainland Africa. The transatlantic slave trade route transported slaves for labor from Africa to European colonies in the Americas. Starting in the fifteenth century, this route saw participation from the Portuguese, Spanish, French, English, Dutch and Danish among others[15].

The Transatlantic Triangular Trade Route

[14] "The Slave Route: 1994-2014: The road less travelled," UNESCO, accessed June 7, 2018, www.unesco.org/culture/pdf/slave/the-slave-route-the-road-travelled-1994-2014-en.pdf.

[15] James Rawley and Stephen D. Behrendt, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 3.

The objective of this section is to define and explore the purposes of the transatlantic triangular trade route. What are the objectives and principal components of triangular trade? How did the concept of mercantilism and triangular trade apply directly to the Danish? How did the transatlantic triangular trade route benefit Denmark?

The colonial triangular trade routes were a mechanism that supported an economic viewpoint called mercantilism. Mercantilism "views international trade as a zero-sum game, where the strongest states are the ones with the strongest balance-of-trade."[16] Under a pure mercantile system, the state would have a closed-loop system within their geography of control. The supply of commodities and raw material, the production of manufactured goods and the sale of those goods and commodities would be designed to grow exports while restraining imports resulting in a balance of trade favorable to the state. "Governments used monopolies, quotas and duties…" to influence the ratio of imports to exports.[17]

In the colonial period, the transatlantic tgular trade route refers to the general trading route between a European nation, its African colonies, and its Americas colonies. The term is used to explain the economics of European colonial powers transporting African slaves from Africa to the Americas colonies, and selling or trading those slaves in the Americas for goods, usually sugar, rum or tobacco. Then, the return of those goods

[16] Maria Lavik, "Small Players in the Big Game: Norwegians and the Slave Trade" (MSc Dissertation, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2013), 6.

[17] Lavik, "Small Players," 6.

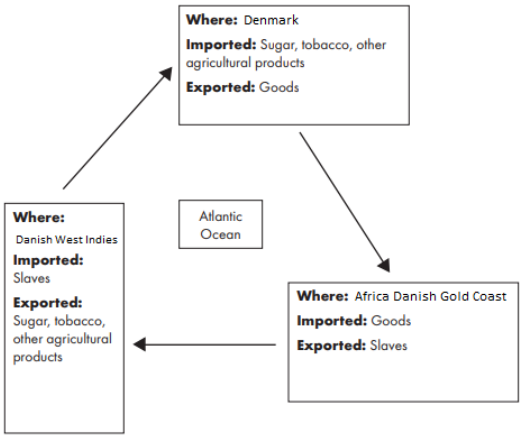
to Europe for sale at a profit and using portions of that profit to buy European products to take to Africa to purchase or trade for African slaves completing the triangle of trade.

The triangular trade route was so named due to the triangular shape exuded by trade involving three continents; Europe, Africa, and America. The particular routes were also shaped by the powerful influence of winds and currents since traders relied on sea travel.[18] The triangular trade was explicitly brought about by economic factors during the 16th century. The three continents involved in the trade possessed products or materials − slaves were considered property − that was more beneficial to the other continent as opposed to the one possessing the product or material. Fundamentally, there was a need to dispose of what a continent possessed in exchange for what it needed. Africa produced slaves who were transported to the Caribbean to grow colonial crops such as sugar cane. These crops and raw materials could then be transported to Europe where they were utilized for the manufacture of processed goods. These manufactured goods would then be sold in Europe while the surplus, such as firearms, could be transported to Africa for the purchase of more slaves. This resulted in a cyclical trade route, which was given the name triangular trade route.

[18] Erik Gøbel, "Danish Shipping along the Triangular Route, 1671–1802," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 36, no. 2 (2011): 135.

The Danish triangular trade route followed this general definition. In 2011, Eric Gøbel published *Danish Shipping along the Triangular Route, 1671–1802.* Written from a nationalistic perspective, Gøbel discusses in detail sailing routes, voyages, slave merchant vessels, and cargo.[19] Danish naval ships and Danish flagged merchant vessels would depart Europe for the Danish Gold Coast of Africa with various manufactured goods from Europe. These goods would be used to trade for African slaves at the Danish forts of the Danish Gold Coast. These African slaves would be embarked to the Danish West Indies where they would be sold to the sugar plantations to be used for labor. The profit from the sale of the slaves would then be used to buy raw sugar or molasses from the colony, which was then shipped back to Europe and sold for a profit thus completing the triangular trade.[20]

Figure 1 Danish Triangular Trade Route



Point One: The Danish West Indies to Supply Raw Materials

The transatlantic triangular trade route needed a trading point in the Americas where the exchange of slaves for raw materials, manufactured goods or other means of purchase could happen.[21] The Danish started settling in the Danish West Indies with the

[19] Gøbel, "Danish Shipping," 135-155.

[20] "Voyages – The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database," Emory University, accessed August 1, 2017, http://www.slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates.

[21] Rawley and Behrendt, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 12.

objective to establish plantations for the massive cultivation of sugar cane and tobacco to be shipped back to Denmark. The Danish West Indies, located in the Caribbean between North and South Americas, was strategically positioned to be this trading point for Denmark.[22]

Initially, the Danish had a small population in St. Thomas. They had occupied the colony with around 116 indentured servants and 62 prisoners, but only 104 of them reached the island with the rest having died in transit.[23] The Danish colonization of the island was met with immediate labor challenges as the island had 47 plantations but only 175 African slaves as of 1680. The Danish settlement and occupation of St. Thomas significantly increased the demand for slaves in the colony. The initial colonization of St. Thomas by Denmark was not easy. The Danish noted that Indians, who previously occupied the island, were not suitable for the hard work on the plantation. Some studies mention that plantations in St. Thomas were to be worked on by convicts from Denmark. However, when the native Indians and convicts proved unsuitable, the Danish attention turned to the shipment of slaves from Africa.[24] This was intensified by the fact that the Caribbean islands gained a reputation as a graveyard for the white population.[25] Without

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[22] Vibæk, *Danish West Indies*, 12.

[23] Niklas Thode Jensen and Gunvor Simonsen, "Introduction: The Historiography of Slavery in the Danish-Norwegian West Indies, C. 1950-2016," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 41, no. 4-5 (2016): 486.

[24] Jensen and Simonsen, "Introduction: The Historiography of Slavery," 486.

[25] Joseph Evans Loftin Jr, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade" (Ph.D. diss, Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, 1977), 8-10.

labor, the colonial plantations could not have been productive paralyzing the entire triangular trade.

By the early eighteenth century, demand for slave labor proliferated to meet the needs of the growing sugar plantations in the Danish West Indies. Statistics show that the number of plantations in St. Croix increased from 264 to 375 from 1742 to 1755.[26] Growing and harvesting sugar cane was labor intensive. The cane was planted by slaves, maintained by slaves for one year and then harvested by the slave workforce. Since this work was labor intensive, as plantation volume increased, slave numbers increased. By the late eighteenth century, the ratio of African slaves to whites was ten to one.[27]

The harbor in St. Thomas, known initially as Port Taphus but renamed Charlotte Amalie in 1691, was ideal for merchant traffic. It was a deep-water protected harbor; it had excellent facilities and markings and the Danish promoted modest harbor fees. Accordingly, slave merchant traffic through the port steadily increased. Throughout the eighteenth century, the Danish concentrated their effort on establishing sugar plantations throughout the three primary islands. While under Danish control, the Danish welcomed all nationalities in this endeavor as they viewed the colony as simply part of an economic engine that needed managers and workers.[28]

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[26] Svend Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure of the Danish African Slave Trade," *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 19, no. 2 (1971): 150-157.

[27] Vibæk, *Danish West Indies*, 26-35.

[28] Vibæk, *Danish West Indies*, 26-35.

The Danish West Indies were a vital point of supply of raw materials for the Danish transatlantic trade route.

Point Two: Denmark to Consume and Provide Manufactured Goods

In the 18th century, there was an extensive demand for sugar and tobacco in Europe.[29] Raw sugar from the Danish West Indies plantations was the primary product exported from the islands to Denmark. From 1734 to 1754, sugar accounted for 86 percent of the total value of goods exported. The harvested sugar cane was transformed into brown raw sugar and placed in barrels to be shipped to Denmark.[30] While relatively risk-free this part of the journey is also not free of peril. A famous example is the *Fredensborg*, which crashed on the Norwegian coast at the last leg of the journey.[31]

A typical cargo from the Danish West Indies back to Denmark is illustrated by the merchant ship "Kronprins Christian." This ship sailed from Charlotte Amalie to Denmark in 1761. "It was loaded with 711 barrels of raw sugar and 10 bales of cotton, 8 barrels of young rum and 11 casks and 23 sacks of coffee."[32]

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[29] Jonannes Brondsted, *The Danish West Indies until 1755: Colonization and Company* (Copenhagen: Fremad, 1966), 22.

[30] Vibæk, *Danish West Indies*, 26-35.

[31] Rawley and Behrendt, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 3.

[32] "The Danish West-Indies – Sources of history," Danish National Archives, accessed May 1, 2018, https://www.virgin-islands-history.org/en/history/trade-and-shipping/ships-loaded-with-riches/.

The supply of raw materials from the Danish West Indies powered the economy of Denmark. Vibaek describes the period from 1755 to 1800 as the "era of greatness."[33] In 1755 St. Croix exported to Denmark 2000 casks of sugar. In less than ten years, by 1764, exports of sugar from St. Croix had increased to 23,600 casks.[34] As the supply of raw sugar from the Danish West Indies increased, the sugar refining industry soon became "the most important industrial branch in Copenhagen in the years following 1755."[35] The sugar industry, the production of sugar on the plantations in the Danish West Indies and the sugar refining industry in Copenhagen, became Denmark's most valuable industry; "surpassing the total value of all other European imports in the year 1763 to 1783."[36]

Denmark was the critical second point in the triangular trade route. The profit from the sale of sugar was utilized to purchase other manufactured goods, which were used as currency in trade with the Danish Gold Coast of Africa.

Point Three: Africa's Danish Gold Coast to Supply Labor

The triangular trade route allowed Denmark to import slaves from Africa to work on the Danish West Indies plantations adding to those slaves who had been brought by previous occupants. The Danish established trading forts on Africa's Danish Gold Coast

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[33] Vibæk, *Danish West Indies*, 17.

[34] Vibæk, *Danish West Indies*, 67.

[35] Lavik, "Small Players," 20.

[36] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 210-213.

present-day Ghana.[37] The trade routes themselves were not altered much, with ships sailing from Copenhagen to Africa's Danish Gold Coast to first pick up the slaves. This journey typically took anywhere from 4 to 6 months, and the ships often stopped at ports in between for supplies and trade. However, major stops were avoided until they harbored at the Danish Gold Coast. Slaves were then purchased from African tribal leaders with goods manufactured in Denmark. The slaves were then transported to the Danish West Indies to work on the plantations.[38]

The Danish kept impeccable records including a precise record of the goods brought from Copenhagen or purchased along the way that would be used to purchase slaves in the Danish Gold Coast. One such accounting is in the Royal Chartered Danish-Guinea Company trade book for the ship "Eleonara" dated January 22-23, 1770. Shown in Figure 2 and translated in Table 1 below, the trade book documents that a young male slave was purchased for 176 rigsdalers paid with various goods. And, a girl slave with "upright breasts" was purchased for 159 rigsdalers of goods.[39]

[37] Gøbel, "Danish Shipping," 135-155.

[38] Brondsted, *The Danish West Indies*, 22.

[39] "Guinea Company Trade Book," Danish National Archives, accessed May 1, 2018, https://www.sa.dk/ao-soegesider/en/billedviser?epid=20203127#293573,59344543

Figure 2 Trade Book of the Danish ship "Eleonara" dated January 22-23, 1770 courtesy of the Danish National Archives

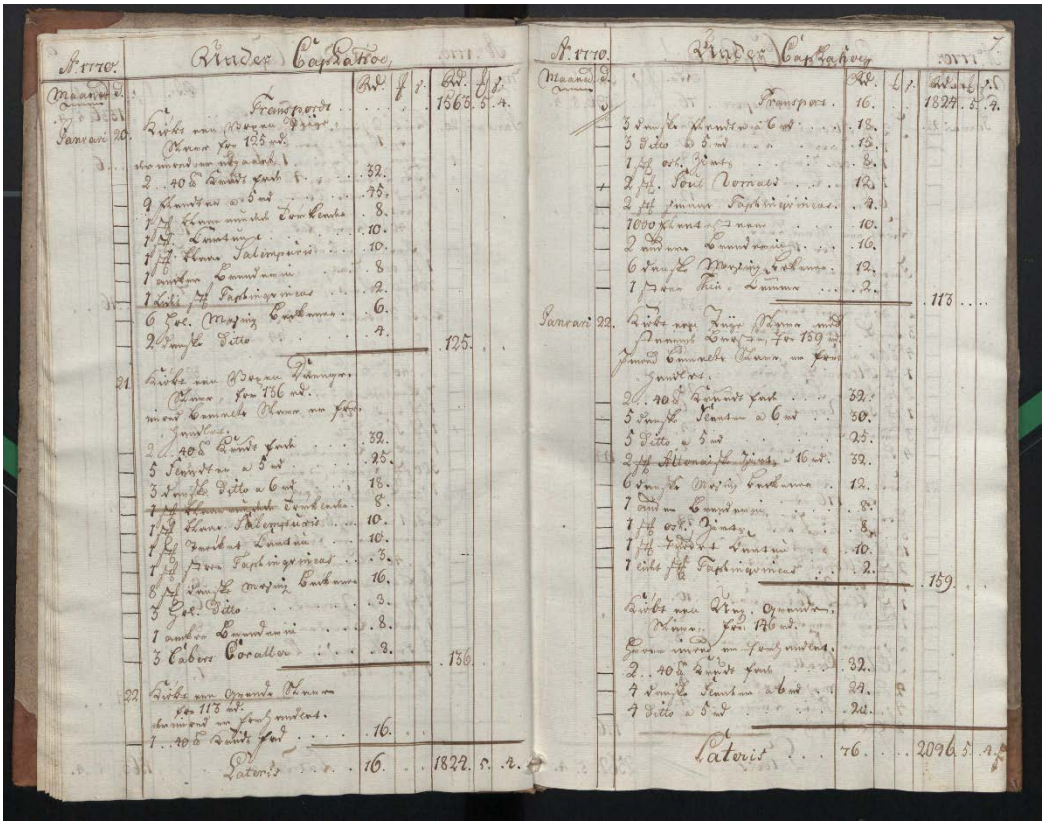


Table 1 Translation of Figure 2

Quantity	Item	Value (Rigsdaler)
3	40-pound barrels of gunpowder	48
10	Dutch flintlocks at five rigsdalers apiece	50
3	zirtz [fine smooth cotton textile with imprinted colored patterns]	40
1	blue salempuris [Indian cotton textile]	10
1	barrel aquavit	8
2	small flask holders [box divided into small spaces for flasks]	8
2	cabes corals [1 cabes was 2000 cowry shells or 2 rigsdalers]	2

Quantity	Item	Value (Rigsdaler)
2	Danish brass basin	4
4	small pewter bowl	4
2	Dutch brass basins	2
Total		176

Once the ships reached the Danish West Indies, they could sell the slaves and restock on sugar that was then taken back to Denmark. Thus the Danish triangular trade route was complete. On average, a ship took around a year to complete this transatlantic slave trade triangle.[40]

A good number of people were engaged in this triangular trade route. Of the nearly 100 captains engaged in trade, more than two-third only completed one trade cycle. The most famous captain is probably Ole Eriksen who managed to complete five rounds along the triangle. It is critical to understand that in addition to participating in the slave trade, these ships carried European supplies to the Danish colonies in Africa as well. In general, these included textiles and alcohol in addition to military ammunition. They also carried sugar and cotton back to other countries in Europe.

Denmark's transatlantic triangular trade route followed the same principles of mercantilism as that of the other colonial powers including the Portuguese, Spanish and English. As stated by the advocate of mercantilism for the French, Jean-Baptiste Colbert "It is simply, and solely, the abundance of money within a state [which] makes the

[40] Rawley and Behrendt, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 3.

difference in its grandeur and power."[41] Denmark would gain wealth for the country, monarchy, and nobility by controlling the trade between its African and Americas colonies. While smaller in volume, over time the Danish triangular trade route and the Danish West Indies, in particular, became not only crucial to Denmark but to the triangular trade route of other colonial powers and colonies.[42]

The Critical Components of Denmark's Slave Trade

The focus of this section is on the critical components that gave rise to the Danish slave trade including the establishment and growth of slave forts along the Danish Gold Coast, the establishment of colonies in the Danish West Indies and the role of outsourcing in the Danish slave trade.

Danish Gold Coast of Africa

The history of Danish slavery is deeply linked to the establishment of forts across the Danish Gold Coast of Africa, present-day Ghana. Denmark was able to establish their first outposts with the assistance of Hendrik Carlof. Carlof on behalf of the Swedish Africa Company established Fort Carlsborg. He became disenchanted with the Swedes. At the start of the Swedish-Danish War in 1657, Carlof left the employ of the Swedes and

[41] A. J. Sargent, "The Economic Policy of Colbert," *Studies in Economics and Political Science,* No. 5 (London: Longmans, 1899), 65.

[42] Vibæk, *Danish West Indies*, 12.

shifted "his allegiance to Denmark at the onset of the Swedish-Danish War in 1657."[43] Carlof had well-developed connections with the local African leaders. In 1657 he was able to deliver to the Danes control of Fort Carlsborg as well as the outposts at Anamabu, Osu, Takoradi, and Jumoree. The possession of these forts was fleeting. Sweden regained possession of Carlsborg in 1659, and the Dutch were able to possess Anamabu, Osu, Takoradi, and Jumoree.[44]

The first Danish location in Africa was at Fort Carlsborg, which was under Danish control for less than a year starting in 1658. The next was Fort Frederiksborg, which was first established in 1659 by the African Company of Glückstadt, a merchant company acting on behalf of Denmark.[45] Through an agreement with the local African leader, the Dey of Fetu, Fort Frederiksborg was the first lasting Danish outpost and was "not much more than a musket shot' from the British Castle at Cape Coast."[46] This fort lost its significance as Fort Christiansborg flourished. Christiansborg would remain the center of Danish influence in the Danish Gold Coast for nearly five decades.

Fort Christiansborg was by far the most critical fort to be controlled by Denmark and was located in present-day Osu, Ghana. Established by the Portuguese in 1550, it changed hands multiple times before coming under Danish control. The site for Fort

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[43] Christopher DeCorse, "The Danes on the Gold Coast: Culture Change and the European Presence," *African Archaeological Review* 11 (1993), 155.

[44] DeCorse, "The Danes on the Gold Coast," 155.

[45] Lavik, "Small Players," 5.

[46] DeCorse, "The Danes on the Gold Coast," 155.

Christiansborg was obtained from Paramount Chief Okaikoi of the Ga ethnic group by the Danish Governor Jost Cramer in 1661 for an exchange of 3,200 gold florins. At the time of the purchase, the Danish presence in the Gold coast was still concentrated around Frederiksborg. A major hub of the slave trade, Fort Christiansborg was named in honor of King Christian V, the then reigning king of Denmark. Though this fort was temporarily held by the Portuguese and even taken over by members of the African tribe Akwamu, it was by and far, the seat of Danish power in this region.[47] This fort was undoubtedly a critical factor in establishing Danish presence along the Danish Gold Coast.

A period of Danish expansion was led by Governor Severin Schjelderup, who was appointed a governor of Fort Christiansborg in August 1734.[48] At this time, Fort Christiansborg was the only Danish fort on the Gold Coast. Understanding the importance of expansion, and not shy on his ambition, "he reopened the trading lodge at the island Ada, situated a few miles from the mouth of the river Volta."[49] In 1736 the Danish presence was further strengthened by the establishment of Fort Friedensborg in Ningo.[50] For a price of 640 riksdalers, Schjelderup negotiated to buy slaves at a set price from the local chief; Owusu. Owusu agreed to provide land to the Danish to build the fort and serve as the protector to the Danes; "assume responsibility for anything that might be

[47] A. van Dantzig, *Forts and Castles of Ghana* (Accra: Sedco, 1980), 22-34.

[48] Lavik, "Small Players," 10.

[49] Lavik, "Small Players," 12.

[50] Lavik, "Small Players," 5.

lost from there, and to procure it for us again, and in all conceivable ways to protect us."[51]

Later, three smaller forts (Fort Kongensten in Ada, Fort Prinzenstein in Keta, and Fort Augustaborg in Teshie) were established, thus establishing a Danish monopoly over the region.[52] Fort Cong Heights at Cong was also part of the Danish establishment on the Danish Gold Coast[53]. However, not a lot is known about the day-to-day operations and history of this fort.

In 1699, a book was published in Copenhagen based on the notes of Eric Tylleman who had died the year previous. At his time of death, Tylleman was the Governor of the Danish Settlements on the Gold Coast. The book is a translation of 72 of 163 pages of Tylleman's notes containing descriptions of the country of Guinea (now Ghana) including all colonial forts, lodges, and possessions known by him. Tylleman identifies some forts and lodges that were or had been under Danish control. These include the fort at Frederiksborg, the fort of Carlsborg (later renamed Cape Coast Castle),

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[51] Lavik, "Small Players," 13-14.

[52] Pernille Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First: A Trans-Imperial Study of the Abolition of the Danish Slave Trade in 1792," *Slavery & Abolition* 35, no. 4 (2013): 1-17.

[53] "List of Danish Colonial Forts and Possessions," Colonial Voyage, accessed March 2018, https://www.colonialvoyage.com/list-danish-colonial-forts-possessions/#%3E.

a former Danish lodge now Fort Manomobu, the trading station at Takorary, a lodge at Ursou and the Brandenburg controlled lodge at Accoda.[54]

The Danish Gold Coast went through another expansion of forts, lodges, and factories in the 1780's under the stewardship of J. A. Killge the governor of the Danish Gold Coast from 1780 to 1788. While the number of Danish ships visiting the Danish Gold Coast had declined, sales of slaves at the Danish Gold Coast were not declining. The reason was twofold. First, Killge was actively selling slaves to non-Danish ships. Second, Killge expanded the Danish presence on the Gold Coast. During this time, Killge founded the slave factories at Popo and Aflahu. Also, he founded the fort of Kongensten in 1783 and the fort of Prinzenstein in 1784. Lastly, he took by force from the Dutch the factory at Ponny.[55]

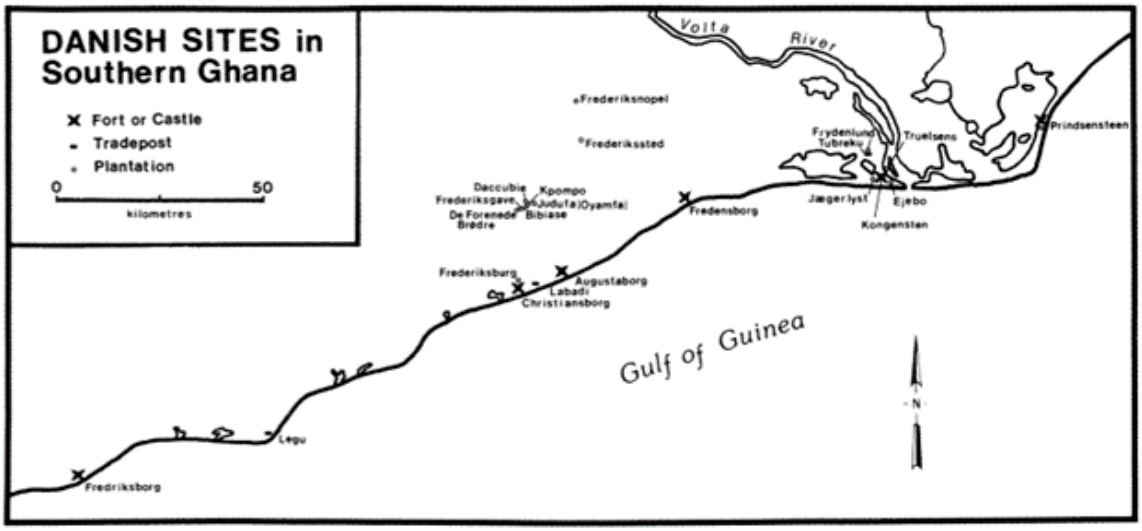
In addition to the Danish-controlled possessions, the Brandenburg Africa Company had slave-trading outposts in Africa. As Denmark was their primary and at times sole trading partner for African slaves, these outposts should be noted when discussing Danish influence in Africa. Fort Großfriedrichsburg located on the West African Gold Coast was constructed by Brandenburg in 1683 and became the cornerstone of their slave trade to the Danish West Indies. Due to high operating costs, the Brandenburg's decided to "reduce the number of working slaves at the fort from 216 to

[54] Mathew Nathan, "The Gold Coast at the End of the Seventeenth Century under the Danes and Dutch," *Journal of the Royal African Society* 4, no. 13 (1904): 13-18.

[55] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 175.

60 and to send the rest to St. Thomas in the West Indies."[56] The Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm I decided to exit the possessions in Africa, and the Fort was sold and transferred to the Dutch in 1718.

Figure 3 Partial Map of Danish Sites in Southern Ghana (courtesy of DeCorse, 62)



As illustrated in Figure 3, The Danish were focused on what is now Southern Ghana on the eastern Gold Coast of West Africa; the Danish Gold Coast. However, the Danes also operated lodges at Bagos on the Sierra Leone River and, most likely, a lodge near Sao Tome on an island off the west coast of Africa.[57] Over the course of the Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade "The Danes established more than thirty forts, trading lodges, and plantations on the Gold Coast, and they played an important role in

[56] Andrea Weindl, "The Slave Trade of Northern Germany from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries," in *Extending the Frontiers: Essays on the New Transatlantic Slave Trade Database* (London: Yale University Press, 2008), Chap 5.

[57] DeCorse, "The Danes on the Gold Coast," 155.

the development of African-European relations in the region."[58] Many of these locations are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2 Danish Controlled or Utilized Locations in Africa

NAME OF CASTLE, FORT, LODGE, FACTORY OR OUTPOST	LOCATION	DATES OF CONTROL BY DENMARK	COMMENTS	PRIMARY SOURCE
Arguin	An island off the coast of what is now Mauritania	1685-1717	Operated by the BAC whom had a contractual relationship with Denmark to supply slaves to the Danish West Indies.	Thomas, p224 Sutton, p451 Henige, p383-384 Masson, p118
Bagos Lodge	Sierra Leone River	?	Mentioned but little data	DeCorse, p155 (Norregard 25, 30
Butre	Butre (or Butri)	1684-1717	Controlled by BAC according to Sutton	Sutton, p448
Factory at Popo	Little Popo	1772-1791		Strickrodt, p134, 139, 146 Gøbel, p268-271
Factory at Aflahk	Aflahk (or Aflao, Aflahue)	1772-1791		Strickrodt, p 139, 148, 146 Gøbel, p270-271
Factory at Ponny	Ponny (or Kpone)	1772-1791		Gøbel, p269-271
Fort Augustaborg	Teshie	1787 to 1850	Sold to England in 1850.	Carstensen, p352 Dantzig, p58 Biveridge, p41
Fort Carlsborg (or Carolusborg)	Cape Coast (or Cape Castle) at Cabo Corso	1658	Built by Sweden in 1653, it was briefly occupied by the Danish in 1658, returned to Swedish control in 1659 and ended in Dutch control from 1663	Decorse, p5, 155 Nathan, p5 Sutton, p449
Fort Christiansborg	Accra near present day Osu	1658 - 1659 1661 - 1680 1683 – 1693 1694 - 1850	Captured from Sweden in 1658. Briefly occupied by Portuguese from 1680-1682. Sold to England in 1850.	Decorse, p159
Fort Cong Heights	Cong	1651 to 1661		Sutton, p457

[58] DeCorse, "The Danes on the Gold Coast," 149.

NAME OF CASTLE, FORT, LODGE, FACTORY OR OUTPOST	LOCATION	DATES OF CONTROL BY DENMARK	COMMENTS	PRIMARY SOURCE
Fort Dorothea (or Accada, Akwida)	Akwida (or Akwada, Akwidah). The Gulf of Guinea near Cape Three Points	1684 – 1687 1698– 1709 1712 – 1717	Operated by the BAC whom had a contractual relationship with Denmark to supply slaves to the Danish West Indies. Sold to the Dutch in 1718.	Nathan, p13 Sutton, p451 Thomas, p224
Fort Fredensborg	Old Ningo	1734 to 1850	Sold to England in 1850.	Danzig, p55-57 Gøbel, p270
Fort Frederiksborg (or Fredriksborg, Friderichsbu'rg)	Amanful (or Amanfro, Amanful Hill)	1659 to 1685	Built in 1659 by the Danish Governor Joseph Kramer. In April 1685, Governor Hans Lykke handed it over to the English at Cabo Corso. Renamed Fort Royal	Decorse, p158 Gøbel, p5 Nathan, p18
Fort Großfriedrichsburg	Princesstown/ Pokesu, the Gulf of Guinea near Cape Three Points	Danish lodge 1658 Fort 1682–1717 Occupied by African chief John Conny 1717-1725	Operated by the BAC whom had a contractual relationship with Denmark to supply slaves to the Danish West Indies. Captured by the Dutch in 1725 and renamed Fort Hollandia. It remained in the possession of the Dutch until 1872 when it was ceded to Britain.	Sutton, p451 Harris, p112
Fort Kongensten (or Konigenstein)	Ada	Outpost 1650 Lodge/Factory 1731- 1783 Fort 1784-1850 Briefly taken by Ashantis in 1811	Sold to England in 1850.	Gøbel, p5, 111, 271 Dookhan, p126-127
Fort Manomobu	Anomabu (or Anomobu, Anemobu, Annamabu, Anomabo)	1657-1660	Captured from Sweden by the Danes in 1657. Captured by Dutch in 1660. Ended in English control from 1693.	Nathan, p20 Decorse, p155 Sutton, p448
Fort Prinsensten (or Prindensten or Prinzenstein)	Keta	Outpost 1714-1731 1737-1780 Keta factory 1780-1784 Fort 1784 to 1850	Sold to England in 1850.	Danzig, p58

NAME OF CASTLE, FORT, LODGE, FACTORY OR OUTPOST	LOCATION	DATES OF CONTROL BY DENMARK	COMMENTS	PRIMARY SOURCE
Fort Sophie Louis	Takrama	1690 – 1708 English briefly captured in 1691. Abandoned in 1708	Operated by the BAC whom had a contractual relationship with Denmark to supply slaves to the Danish West Indies. Sold to Dutch in 1717	Data unverified. http://ghananet.weebly.com/forts-and-castles.html Dantzig, viii, p38-39 Biveridge, p41
Jumoree	Jumoree (or Jumore)	1657 - 1660	Danish forces took the lodge from Swedes (Carloff). In 1659 or 1660 the Dutch recaptured it.	Decorse, p155 Biveridge, p41
Labadi		?	Mentioned in several academic works with little detail	Decorse, p155, 157 Justesen, p542 Perbi, p41 Isert, p32 Biveridge, p41 Pope, p114
Legu		?	Mentioned in several academic works with little detail	Decorse, p155, 157 Millwood, p6
Morie Fort Nassau	Cape Coast	?1640-1665	Built by the Dutch in 1612. Lodge successively occupied by the Dutch, Swedes, Danes, Dutch (again), English and Dutch (again) from 1640-65.	Unverified. http://www.ghanaembassyiran.com/en/page/fortandcastles Biveridge, p41
Sao Tome Lodge	Island off of West Coast of Africa.	?	Controlled by the Portuguese, however, Gluckstadt Company was said to trade from this Portuguese lodge. Gluckstadt was under contract to deliver slaves to the Danish West Indies.	Decorse, p155 (Norregard p49 Thomas, p224
Takorary (or Takoradi)		1657-1659 1665-? 1690-1717	Danish took over from Spain in 1657, lost to Dutch in 1659 and lost to English in 1660. Danes recovered in 1665. Sutton has it under Prussian control from 1690 to 1717, presumably by BAC.	Nathan, p13-17 Hart, p28 Decorse, p155 Sutton, p449
Trubreku		?	Mentioned in several academic works with little detail	Decorse, p155, 157 Biveridge, p32

NAME OF CASTLE, FORT, LODGE, FACTORY OR OUTPOST	LOCATION	DATES OF CONTROL BY DENMARK	COMMENTS	PRIMARY SOURCE
Ursou (or Osu, Ursow)	Accra	1658-1660 1660-1680 1693-1850	1658 Danish forces took the lodge from Swedes (Carloff). In 1660 the Dutch captured it. Sutton has it coming under Danish control again from 1660-1680 and 1693 to 1850.	Decorse, p155 Sutton, p448 Nathan, p25

It is critical to understand that while the Danish forts were strongholds for the slave trade, they flourished with the blessings of the African principalities that surrounded it. These forts functioned as centers of economic activities including the slave trade as opposed to military strongholds. There is evidence of all major tribes in the region (Asante, Fante, and Ahanta) engaged in the slave trade, and the supply of slaves to Europeans was mainly under the control of African tribal chiefs or local merchants[59].

"The Danes maintained outposts from 1659 until 1850, eventually dominating the European trade between Accra and Keta."[60] This would end in 1850. In 1849, Denmark began to make overtures to England to transfer ownership of their possessions in Africa. In a letter to the British, the Danes stated they "…would greatly prefer to transfer the sovereignty of the said possession to the Court of St. James, which never shrinks from the sacrifices required by the pursuit of these noble objects, and with which the Danish

[59] La Verle Berry, "Area Handbook Series: Ghana: A Country Study," Library of Congress Washington DC Federal Research Division, 1995, 12.

[60] DeCorse, "The Danes on the Gold Coast," 150.

Government have always co-operated as regards the abolition of the Slave Trade."[61] The transfer was completed on March 6th, 1850 ending Danish colonial ambition in Africa.

The Danish West Indies in the Americas

The first European to arrive in what became the Danish West Indies was Christopher Columbus who landed on St. Croix in November of 1493; his second voyage to the Americas. However, the native Indian inhabitants overpowered the Spaniards forcing them away.[62] Columbus gave the three-island archipelago situated to the east of Puerto Rico the name Virgin Islands. The islands were subsequently visited by the Danish, English, French, and Dutch, but no colonial power specifically claimed the island of St. Thomas. Geographically these islands are relatively small; a total area of 333 km.[63] However, they attracted the attention of Europeans in the 17th century due to their capacity to produce valuable products of the time; sugar and tobacco.[64] The Danish who had other colonies in Asia and Africa started occupying the islands from the 1640s as well as other Europeans such as the Dutch and British. In 1666, the King of Denmark Erik Smith claimed the island of St. Thomas.[65] Shortly after the Danish claim, Fort Christian was built and named after the Danish King.

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[61] Nathan, "African Society," 8.

[62] Vibæk, *Danish West Indies*, 43.

[63] "The World Factbook," *Choice Reviews Online* 47, no. 4 (2009): 96.

[64] Vibæk, *Danish West Indies*, 43.

[65] Rawley and Behrendt, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 48-65.

By 1686, there were 300 whites and 333 slaves; by 1700 the number of slaves had risen to 1,317. The expanding plantation business at St. Thomas required additional space to accommodate the activities and increase production.[66] As a result, Jorgen Iversen Dyppel tried to occupy St. John (St. Jan) in 1675 by sending two merchants and troops on the island.[67] He was unsuccessful. These new occupants were chased away, but the reoccupation began again when in 1718 Governor Erik Bredal occupied the island claiming it for Denmark. The Danish seized the warehouses and cargoes of tobacco and slaves who were then used for plantation labor on both St. Thomas and St. John.

St. Thomas was never ideally suited for cultivation and quickly the soil on the island of St. John, due to over cultivation, became depilated.[68] Hence the Danes needed to expand geographically.

St. Croix to the South was both large and more fertile, and Denmark bought it from the French West Indies Company in 1733. The new occupied island was fertile and productive, and the Danish were desperate to seek labor for the new plantations at St.

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[66] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 150.

[67]Alfredo Figueredo, *Negotiating Enslavement: Perspectives on Slavery in the Danish West Indies* (Charlotte Amalie: Antilles Press, 2007), 126.

[68] Jensen and Simonsen, "Introduction: The Historiography of Slavery," 177.

Croix[69]. Expansion of the plantations continued until 1733 where sugar production was quickly replaced by other crops such as indigo and cotton.[70]

Establishing the Danish West Indies allowed Denmark to establish a New World base to supply raw materials for the Danish transatlantic triangular trade route.[71]

Denmark's Outsourcing of the Slave Trade

The monarchy of Denmark used several mechanisms to ensure the triangular trade route and the slave trade continued to prevail in the kingdom from the 17th to the beginning of the 19th century.[72] The Transatlantic slave trade route was essential for the European economies to flourish, and therefore a complex formal and informal legal system was developed to support the trade[73]. Some of the mechanisms the Danish monarchy used included privatization, nationalization and royal decrees. It is important to note that the Danish monarchy wanted the slave trade to continue even when it was not profitable to the government: "Since the business was not very profitable and the monarchy wanted it to continue, the government gave the companies monopoly

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[69] Bastian, "A Question of Custody," 96-114.

[70] Niklas Thode Jensen, *For the Health of the Enslaved: Slaves, Medicine and Power in the Danish West Indies, 1803-1848* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2012), 481-484.

[71] Westergaard, *Danish West Indies under Company Rule*, 123.

[72] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 166.

[73] Glenn Willemsen and Kwame Nimako, and Eric Mielants. *The Dutch Atlantic: Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation* (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 13-51.

power."[74] When these companies were not meeting their objectives or were failing financially, the monarchy simply took over the business or by decree abolished their charter.

The belief at the time was that chartered companies were a critical component within a mercantile system and vital for the success of a triangular trade route. In 1779, a Danish Minister summed up the importance of chartered companies to the state's triangular trade "the State's general interests are most closely linked with the welfare of the Company."[75] Chartered companies would be given specific tasks related to triangular trade. At times, they might be given the right to colonize a new possession. Some chartered companies might be given the task of transportation of raw materials and labor. "In order to build sound chartered companies, the state would provide privileges such as monopoly of trade, no duty on exports, tax freedom for the company employees and own jurisdiction."[76]

The history of Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade includes a complicated relationship between the monarchy and a myriad number of chartered companies and individuals contracted to maximize the transatlantic triangular trade route.

The Danish Africa Company of Glückstadt 1660-1673

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[74] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 165.

[75] Lavik, "Small Players," 6.

[76] Lavik, "Small Players," 6.

The Danish King Christian IV was the first to provide a charter related to the slave trade to a private merchant company; the Danish Africa Company. Based in Glückstadt (Germany) the city while not officially Danish was founded by the Danish King. The company was established by Hendrik Carloff of Finland and Isaac Coymans and Nicolales Pancras (both Dutch), and the German merchants Vincent Klingenberg and Jacob del Boe. The charter of the company was to establish a slave trade in Africa through the establishments of Danish outposts there. Initially, the company had some success establishing Fort Frederiksborg in 1659 and Fort Christiansborg in 1661. "Christiansborg came to play a major role in the Dano-Norwegian slave trade."[77] The company ran into financial problems and was never able to adequately establish trading relationships in volume with the local African chiefs. The company "renounced its privileges in 1673."[78] It was then acquired by the Royal Chartered Danish West India and Guinea Company.

Royal Chartered Danish West India and Guinea Company 1671-1690

King Christian V of Denmark established the Royal Chartered Danish West India and Guinea Company (shortened Danish West India Company) in 1671. The company resembled a modern joint-stock organization. The King and other wealthy Danish supplied the capital.[79] The objective of the Danish West India Company was to create

[77] Lavik, "Small Players," 5.

[78] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 6.

[79] Westergaard, *Danish West Indies under Company Rule*, 123.

revenue and profit for the stockholders of the company through the establishment and growth of the Danish triangular trade route.[80]

At first, the company was given exclusive rights to colonize the island of St. Thomas. The company was focused on setting up plantations on St. Thomas and establishing trade links to Denmark and the Danish Gold Coast of Africa. Thus, the company was granted a trade monopoly for the island among other favors. Most importantly, the company had the exclusive right to export raw material from the island to Denmark and the import from Denmark of the processed goods produced.[81] In 1674, the company acquired the Danish African Company of Glückstadt and thus gained control of the Danish Gold Coast colonies in Africa. During this time, the Danish Gold Coast consisted of five major African ports: Fort Christiansborg, Fort Fredensborg, Fort Prinsensten, Fort Kongensten, and Fort Augustaborg.[82] By controlling the supply of labor from the Danish Gold Coast and the supply of raw material from St. Thomas, the company now had a trade monopoly for the entire Danish triangular trade route.

With such a large undertaking, the company had difficulties raising sufficient capital to achieve scale. This led the "company to lease out its right to trade in Guinea (Danish Gold Coast) and in the (Danish) West Indies to private merchants in the late 17th

[80] Westergaard, *Danish West Indies under Company Rule*, 20-43.

[81] Rawley and Behrendt, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 13.

[82] Westergaard, *Danish West Indies under Company Rule*, 20-43.

century."[83] During this time, the operations of the Company were primarily relegated to what we would now call subcontractors.

Brandenburg African Company 1685-1715

The Brandenburg African Company (BAC) was closely aligned to Denmark. Established in May 1682 by Elector Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg, the trading company's charter was to promote Brandenburg's economic interests overseas by participating in the transatlantic triangular trade route that had enriched other colonial powers. The company operated out of the Großfriedrichsburg location on the west coast of Africa for nearly four decades.

In 1685 Denmark, through the Danish West India Company, signed a 30-year treat with the BAC to allow them to import slaves into St. Thomas and start a slave-based plantation there. It was the Brandenburg's who developed St. Thomas in earnest as a transshipment point for African slaves. Before the treaty with Brandenburg in 1685, the slave trade in the St. Thomas area was limited. For instance, Governor Jorgen Iversen bought only 98 slaves on behalf of the Danish West India Company for the plantations on St. Thomas from 1672 to 1679. The total number of slaves on St. Thomas in 1686 was 333.[84]

The Danish would receive a duty from the BAC for each slave transaction − 1% of the purchase price for each imported slave and 2% of the purchase price for each slave

[83] Lavik, "Small Players," 5.

[84] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 158.

exported. Also, if the BAC had surplus slaves, the Danes agreed to purchase them for a set price of 80 thalers.[85]

The BAC had initial success. In 1688, war broke out between France and an alliance of Austria, the Dutch, England, Spain, the Holy Roman Empire and Savoy. Referred to as the War of the League of Augsberg, it lasted between 1688 and 1697. Fighting either in the Danish Gold Coast of Africa or the in the Caribbean was minimal. Of benefit to the BAC, since the leading colonial powers were involved in the conflicts in Europe, the BAC could operate in Africa and the Caribbean through the Danish West Indies without much interference.

The BAC was able to use their forts in Africa to transport slaves to St. Thomas. From their slave-trading outpost at Port Taphus, the BAC both sold slaves to the local plantations owners as well as used the harbor for a point of transshipment of slaves to other islands in the Caribbean. It was during this period of time that St. Thomas experienced a marked increase in the slave trade. Asides from the legal slave trade, the BAC was also able to smuggle slaves from St. Thomas into the nearby British Virgin Islands who were experiencing a shortage of labor for their plantations due to England's concentration on the war in Europe.[86]

The initial success of the BAC led to tension with the Danish West India Company whom still had the charter to manage all aspects of the colony. The BAC was

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[85] Hermann Kellenbenz, "Die Brandenburger auf St. Thomas," *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Lateinamerikas* 2, no. 1 (1965): 196-217.

[86] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 9.

concentrating on the slave trade, which while profitable to them, contributed very little to the growth of the colony or revenue for the Danish West India Company. The Governor of the Company wanted the BAC to invest in establishing plantations and a lasting workforce on the island thereby contributing to the tax revenue of the Company. "The conflict culminated in 1690 when the Danish governor ordered a break-in of a storage belonging to the Brandenburg in order to annex sugar and cotton."[87]

While the conflict between the Danish West India Company and the BAC simmered, the Company made a financial decision to lease the entire island of St. Thomas to Jorgen Thormöhlen; detailed in a subsequent section. Thormöhlen also ran into conflicts with the BAC and sent a myriad number of letters documenting his losses.[88] Shortly, the Danish West India Company regained control of the colony from Thormöhlen in 1694, and the BAC continued with their slave trade on St. Thomas. The BAC's profit on the sale of slaves, especially on two shiploads in 1696, convinced the Danish West Indies Company Governor Johan Lorentz to re-establish in 1696 their direct participation in the slave trade at St. Thomas.[89] Both the Danish West Indies Company

[87] Lavik, "Small Players," 8-9.

[88] Lavik, "Small Players," 8-9.

[89] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 157.

and the BAC now had equal rights to the slave trade into the colony sparking fierce competition.[90]

In 1697 the War of the League of Augsburg ended. These colonial powers now started re-establishing aggressive colonization efforts including transportation of slaves from Africa to the Americas. In addition, the BAC now had to compete directly with the Danish West India Company in the slave trade in St. Thomas. After 1699, the BAC slave trade and overall commerce in the Danish West Indies steadily declined. Their treaty with the Danish expired in 1715, and the BAC chose not to renew it, and their presence in the Danish West Indies ended.[91] "Lacking support from Europe, the last Brandenburg-Prussian Director-General abandoned the (African) Gold Coast in 1716, and five years later Arguin was captured by the French."[92]

Nicholas Jansen Arff 1689-1696

Another merchant that was given rights to participate in the transatlantic triangular trade was Nicholas Jansen Arff. In 1689, shortly after Denmark signed the treaty with the BAC to supply slaves from Africa, Denmark leased Fort Christiansborg in the Danish Gold Coast to Arff. In return for a life lease, Arff was to pay the Danish West

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[90] Holger Weiss, *Ports of Globalisation, Places of Creolisation: Nordic Possessions in the Atlantic World during the Era of the Slave Trade Studies in Global Slavery* (Leisden: Brill, 2016), 76.

[91] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 9.

[92] Adam Jones, "Archival Materials on the Brandenburg African Company (1682-1721)," *History in Africa* 11 (1984): 379–389.

India Company two percent duty on the value of each slave exported to St. Thomas. Arff experienced many setbacks. In 1693, Fort Christiansburg was attacked and occupied for one year by the local Adwamu tribe who traded directly with other European nations.[93] In 1694, Arff was able to retake possession of the fort from the Adwamu after paying 3000 riksdalers to the African chief Basua. However, the fort had been ransacked of all capital, and ultimately the undertaking cost Arff 80,000 riksdaler. Arff was never able to recover financially, and Arff gave up the venture in 1696.[94]

Jorgen Thormöhlen 1690-1694

Jorgen Thormöhlen was a Bergen merchant who was born in the Duchy of Holstein, a possession of the King of Denmark. At one time, Thormöhlen possessed the largest merchant fleet in Norway. His economic influence in Norway gave him some degree of political influence "such as an initially friendly relationship with King Christian V, who appointed him as "Kommersedirektør," the equivalent to Minister of Norwegian Trade, in 1681."[95]

In 1690 he was able to contract with the Danish West India Company to lease the entire island of St. Thomas. For an annual rent payment of 4,630 riksdalers, he took control of all assets of the Company in the West Indies including all forts, plantations and slave labor and had the right to collect all rents, duties, and profits associated from the

[93] Weiss, *Ports of Globalisation,* 73.

[94] Weiss, *Ports of Globalisation,* 75.

[95] Lavik, "Small Players," 6.

colony.[96] Thormöhlen sensed the timing for this venture was right. St. Thomas had moved to a stage of growth. By 1691, there were 385 European colonists and 751 slaves on the island.[97] It was Thormöhlen desire to profit from the trade route between St. Thomas and Denmark. Using his merchant fleet, he would supply the plantations on the island with food and manufactured goods from Denmark as well as personnel for the Danish forts. His merchant fleet would return to Denmark with the raw materials produced by the colony. He expected large profits and, initially, he was correct. "Thormøhlen's first return shipment had a value of 26 000 Riksdaler in the West Indies, and he estimated the same goods would have a value of 72 000 Riksdaler in Denmark-Norway."[98]

Thormöhlen management of St. Thomas was short-lived. He had inherited a "complicated relationship between the Danish king and the Brandenburg."[99] However, ultimately the BAC had more influence on the Danish monarchy than Thormöhlen. In an attempt to solve the dispute, Thormöhlen was ordered by the Danish monarchy to pay the BAC 16,000 Riksdaler in the form of cargo to compensate them for the previous warehouse theft. The BAC "also gained the right to trade freely on St. Thomas during the

[96] Westergaard, *Danish West Indies under Company Rule*, 82-99.

[97] Lavik, "Small Players," 8.

[98] Lavik, "Small Players," 8-9.

[99] Lavik, "Small Players," 8-9.

next three years, paying a lower price of its lease than previously agreed."[100] Thormöhlen did his best to lobby the Danish monarchy sending a myriad number of letters documenting his losses.[101] In addition, he had continual clashes with the Danish West India Company over his rights to raise taxes on the island and the Company's duty to provide personnel for island defense. Out of frustration, Thormöhlen eventually ordered the seizure of the Brandenburg properties on St. Thomas without any offer of compensation.

Thormöhlen decision ultimately sealed his fate as to his future in the Danish West Indies. The loss of on-going fees from the BAC and the lack of transportation to move the islands raw materials to Denmark for sale at higher prices than could be obtained in the Caribbean caused financial hardships. Having failed to pay his annual lease payment to the Company, the Danish monarch issued an order on April 7th of 1694 directing proprietorship of the island to be taken from Thormöhlen and returned to the Danish West India Company under the direction of newly appointed Governor John Lorentz.[102]

While he appealed to the courts for satisfaction, having amassed a cash deficit of 59,534 in a mere two years, Thormöhlen was forced into bankruptcy.[103]

Royal Chartered Danish West India and Guinea Company 1694-1754

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[100] Lavik, "Small Players," 8-9.

[101] Lavik, "Small Players," 8-9.

[102] Westergaard, *Danish West Indies under Company Rule*, 103.

[103] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 6.

The Danish West India Company re-established direct management of the Danish West Indies from Thormöhlen in 1694. In 1696, in response to the profits being made by the BAC, the Company re-established direct participation in the slave trade from the Danish Gold Coast to the colonies they managed.[104] The Danish West India Company having all aspects of its operation of the triangular trade route restored would enter a period of expansion for both the Company and Denmark. The Company annexed St. John for the Danish crown in 1718 and purchased St. Croix from the French in 1773.[105] The Company was thus critical in establishing the Danish West Indies.

The Company achieved success in growing the colonies of the Danish West Indies. In 1691, shortly before the Company re-established its management of St. Thomas the population was 547 slaves and 389 whites. By 1755, the Danish West Indies boasted a population of 14,877 slaves and 1,841 whites.[106]

"However, powerful Copenhagen merchants got increasingly dissatisfied with the monopolistic power of the Company, and these protests were coupled with royal ambitions to engage directly in the slave trade."[107] Even with the purchase of St. Croix and the overall growth of the Danish West Indies, the Company had difficulties with high

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[104] Westergaard, *Danish West Indies under Company Rule*, 145.

[105] Isaac Dookhan, *A History of the Virgin Islands of the United States* (Epping: Caribbean Universities Press, 1974), 40-44.

[106] Neville Hall, *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies: St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix,* ed. B. W. Higman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 5.

[107] Lavik, "Small Players," 5.

costs managing the territories, particularly the cost of defending its possession. This was amplified by financial losses due to the loss at sea of three of the Company's merchant ships between 1751 and 1752 and a slave revolt on the third ship in 1753. Shareholders did not see the returns by way of dividends they expected. In addition, both merchants and nobility in Denmark became increasingly vocal "to continuing the special privileges enjoyed by the company, as these increasingly were viewed as harmful to economic growth."[108] As an example, due to the monopoly of the Company, the price of sugar was 30% higher in Denmark compared to Hamburg, Germany. Thus, the Danish West India Company began losing some of its monopolistic rights. Beginning in 1750, the Danish Board of Trade approved the establishment of a number of new sugar refineries. [109]

The Danish West India Company was also experiencing opposition to its monopoly by the plantation owners on the islands. In 1750 the Burger Council (organization of plantation owners) in St. Croix became "furious at new trade restrictions aimed at strengthening the company's trade monopoly."[110] As the merchants and nobility in Denmark, they also began to urge the Danish monarchy, Frederik V, to take direct control of the Danish West Indies from the Danish West India Company. "It was trade restrictions more than anything else which angered European colonists throughout the Americas."[111]

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[108] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 13-14.

[109] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 13-14.

[110] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 13.

[111] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 13.

Under pressure from both merchants and nobility in Denmark and the plantation owners in the Danish West Indies, the Danish Board of Trade recommended in May of 1754 for the Crown to purchase the Company. The president of the Danish West Indies Company at this time was Adam Gottlob von Moltke who was a favorite of the king. Coupled with a very generous offer for the Crown to pay 500 rigsdalers per share and the assumption of all debts, von Moltke readily accepted the Crown's offer. "Since shares in the company had sold for only 300 rigsdalers in the years immediately preceding the sale, the shareholders did very wel1.[112]

Denmark's Direct Oversight of the Danish West Indies 1755-1917

The Danish crown now had direct control of both the Danish West Indies and the outpost's on Africa's Danish Gold Coast.[113] For Denmark, this marked the end of the era of monopolistic charter companies as the implementation mechanism for Danish mercantilism. From 1755 until the Danish West Indies were sold to the United States, the islands were administered and managed directly by the government of Denmark.

It was during these years when Denmark experimented with various free port policies for the Danish West Indies. While the days of outsourcing the management and administration of the islands ceased, Denmark continued to periodically contract with merchants for various trade rights in the Danish West Indies and the rights to the management of the Danish Gold Coast.

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[112] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 14.

[113] Gøbel, "Danish Shipping" 186.

It should be noted that the period of direct Danish oversight of the Danish West Indies excludes 1801-1802 and 1807-1815. The British occupied the Danish West Indies during both of that period.[114]

Royal Chartered Danish-Guinea Company (Bargum Trading Association) 1766-1776

In 1765 the slave population of the Danish West Indies had grown to 15,699.[115] However, the growth of the colonies continued to create a labor shortage. In an attempt to spur slave imports into the colonies, forts of the Danish Gold Coast and the rights to the slave trade to the Danish West Indies was assigned to the Royal Chartered Danish-Guinea Company (commonly known as Bargum's Trading Association). The company embarked over 3,000 slaves to the Danish West Indies during this time. They also embarked 1,873 to the French from 1770 and 1773. [116] From 1764 to 1777, the Bargum Company "was active with twenty-four triangular trade expeditions."[117] The company experienced financial difficulties in the mid-1770s most likely from the competition of other Danish companies and citizens as a result of the free port status of the Danish West

[114] Dookhan, *A History of the Virgin Islands*, 47.

[115] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 150.

[116] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 17.

[117] "The Danish West-Indies – Sources of history," Danish National Archives, https://www.virgin-islands-history.org/en/history/trade-and-shipping/trading-companies-in-the-west-indies/

Indies during this time frame. In 1776 the Crown resumed direct control of the forts on the Danish Gold Coast.[118]

Denmark's direct management of the Danish Gold Coast continued until 1781 when the Crown gave those rights to the Baltic-Guinea Trade Company.[119]

Royal Danish West India Trading Company 1778-1824

The Crown for a brief period eliminated many of the free trade provisions previously implemented in the Danish West Indies. As a mechanism to handle the trade programs stemming from the edict of 1777, the Crown authorized the charter of the Royal Danish West India Trading Company in May of 1778.

The American Revolution War had begun in 1776. In 1778 France had joined the war with the British colonies against the British. The Company was established specifically to take advantage of the renewed trade restrictions and the conflict of the British and France by creating trade links between the French colonies, the Danish West Indies and Denmark and France.[120]

The trade restrictions of 1777 were removed in 1782.

The American Revolution ended in 1783. The Company had lost their trade preferences in the Danish West Indies and now had to compete with other merchants. As the Company's finance declined, the directors of the Company asked the Crown to purchase the outstanding shares of the company in effect giving the Crown ownership of

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[118] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 580-581.

[119] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 172.

[120] Dookhan, *A History of the Virgin Islands*, 92.

the firm. The Company directors said, "the government could operate the company at a profit, something the directors had given up all hope of doing themselves."[121] The Board of Trade agreed, and the Crown paid the individual shareholders 260 rigsdalers per share despite the Company having a true market value of 60 rigsdalers.[122] The company continued with a very modest operation until 1824 when it was liquidated.[123]

While marginalized in its later years, up until 1807, during the time where the Royal Danish West India Trading Company trading company provided oversight of the slave trade, they along with the Baltic and Guinea Trading Company and the Trading and Canal Company sent a total of sixty-five voyages to the Americas.[124]

Baltic-Guinea Trade Company 1781 – 1787

From 1776 to 1781 the Crown managed the forts directly on the Danish Gold Coast. Increasingly, the Danish monarchy became frustrated with the inability of his subordinates to turn a profit from these outposts. In 1781, King Christian VII would "revert to an earlier policy and put a company in charge of the Danish slave trade, the

[121] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 59.

[122] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 59.

[123] Dookhan, *A History of the Virgin Islands*, 92.

[124] "The Danish West-Indies – Sources of history," Danish National Archives, https://www.virgin-islands-history.org/en/history/trade-and-shipping/trading-companies-in-the-west-indies/.

Baltic-Guinea Trade Company."[125] The crown chartered the Company with a monopoly on the Danish Gold Coast slave trade and as part of the charter gave the Company the exclusive right to use the Greenland and Guinea Navies; 37 ships in total. It should be noted that the Crown was a major investor in the Company.[126] Records show that Fort Christiansborg alone shipped 358 slaves in the year 1778. However, this number quickly rose to over 1300 in 1786[127]. This increase can be credited to Baltic-Guinea Trade Company. Capitalizing on the American War and Danish neutrality, the company made 33 voyages during the war and 18 voyages in the years afterward. "The vast majority of these ships sold slaves to the French and the Spanish colonies rather than to the Danish islands."[128]

This was a period of expansion for the Danish Gold Coast; four additional forts were built during the 1780s.[129] The King's minister of finance, Ernst Schimmelmann, was both a shrewd investor as well as a practical man. Arrangements between charter companies, individual merchants, and the monarchy were complex to achieve a myriad number of objectives both financial and political. In that vein, Schimmelmann arranged for the controlling interest of the Baltic-Guinea Trade Company to be purchased by the

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[125] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 580.

[126] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 580.

[127] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 149-197.

[128] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 580.

[129] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 579.

Crown; “and transfer the company to 'certain persons of means of whose broad experience in business affairs and entire trustworthiness there can be no doubt.”[130]

Pingel, Meyer, Praetorius & Co. 1787-1792

In August 1787, the Baltic-Guinea Trade Company slave trading company was purchased by the Crown and transferred to a Dutch merchant located in Copenhagen; namely, Frederic de Coninck and his partners.[131] “Since their names could not be disclosed, a consortium was formed, consisting of William Werner Pingel, who was de Coninck’s son-in-law, Josef Meyer, and Jeppe Praetorius.”[132] When Pingel passed away, a second son-in-law of de Coninck’s joined the firm in 1789. When Jeppe Praetorius left the company, the name was changed to Duntzfelt, Meyer & Co.

It turns out that Schimmelmann secretly owned part of the endeavor. De Coninck wrote to Schimmelmann in March of 1790 “acknowledging the receipt of 24,000 rigsdalers which had bought the latter a partnership in the company.”[133] As the author C. Nyrop stated in 1896, Schimmelmann had been provided ownership in the company as “a

[130] Green-Pedersen, “The Scope and Structure,” 168.

[131] Røge, “Why the Danes Got There First,” 583.

[132] Green-Pedersen, “The Scope and Structure,” 168.

[133] Green-Pedersen, “The Scope and Structure,” 168.

friendly token of esteem' in recognition of the finance minister's help in connection with the taking over of the company."[134]

By decree of the King on November 7, 1792, Denmark would abolish Danish participation in the slave trade effective at the end of 1802. As part of this decree, the Crown opened the slave trade to the Danish West Indies to all nations until the end of 1802. In addition, exportation of slaves from the Danish Gold Coast was open to all nations. "At the same time, the king resumed control of the Danish possessions in Guinea."[135]

The critical components of Denmark's participation in the transatlantic slave trade began with the establishment of slave trading outposts in Africa; the Danish Gold Coast. These outposts provided the supply of labor. Denmark following traditional mercantilist theory than established colonies in the Americas as a source of raw material. First claiming the island of St. Thomas, by 1733 the three major islands of St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix were all under Danish control and formed the Danish West Indies. Throughout the period of Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade, private companies chartered or contracted by the Crown were an integral component of the triangular trade. This complex interrelationship between these entities and the Crown is critical to understand the historiography of Danish involvement.

Free Port Impact to the Danish West Indies

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[134] C. Nyrop, *Registre til Kjøbenhavns Tømmerlaw og Niels Lunde Reiersen*, (Copenhagen, 1896), 266.

[135] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 168-169.

The Danish West Indies differed from most other European colonies in the Americas in that they were open, free ports of trade during significant time periods of Danish control. The impact of this free port status to Danish involvement in the slave trade is a critical aspect to understanding the overall historiography.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Denmark passed various legislation related to Danish West Indies trade to focus on developing St. John and St. Thomas as trading ports. These Danish laws also aimed at securing an efficient slave workforce for the newly purchased island of St. Croix. The supply of plantation labor, in particular on St. Croix, continued to be problematic. This scarcity of supply provided an impetus for Denmark to make the St. Thomas and St. John an open, free port. The economic advantages offered to slave traders at these ports ensured that the Danish colonial plantations in the Danish West Indies and in particular St. Croix, were always supplied with an adequate workforce.[136]

Edicts of 1754 and 1755

A provisional edict was issued on August 30, 1754 and replaced by a further edict in April of 1755. The decree applied equally applied to all three islands.[137] The decree opened the markets of the three islands to all Danish citizens as opposed to the previous monopolies granted the chartered companies. It did contain certain provisions including that all slave trade was to be conducted on Danish-registered ships and that all slaves

[136] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 158.

[137] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 158.

embarked from the Danish Gold Coast must be transported to the Danish West Indies.[138] A further resolution on October 25, 1756, permitted the import of goods from North America. "Essential commodities could be purchased with rum, molasses and one-sixth of the amount of sugar intended for Denmark."[139] Other resolutions ensured that the slave trade was "kept open and subject to the usual tax."[140]

From 1755-1766, the Danish triangular slave trade grew "partly on account of the Crown and partly on the account of private persons."[141]

Seven Years War 1756-1763

As soon as Danish West Indies port had been made open to all Danish citizens whom could import and export goods including slaves from multiple countries, a war broke out among the European nations. The most notable conflicts were the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars commonly called the Seven Years War (1756-1763).[142] This war brought hostility between Britain, France, Spain, and the Netherlands. Britain imposed a trade embargo on the Caribbean colonies virtually eliminating the viability of slave trades among its enemies.

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[138] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 166-167.

[139] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 579.

[140] Poul Erik Olsen, *Toldvæsenet I Dansk Vestindien* 1672-1917 (Copenhagen: Toldhistorisk Selskab, 1988), 46-47.

[141] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 167.

[142] Jensen and Simonsen, "Introduction: The Historiography of Slavery," 172.

"Denmark was eager to benefit from its position as a neutral power and therefore decreed that St. Thomas was to further lower tariffs and function as a free port for warring sides."[143] While these decrees were specific to St. Thomas, this free trade effectively took place on all three islands of the Danish West Indies. With Denmark being neutral in the war, the British enemies sent their goods including slaves to the harbors of the Danish West Indies to avoid the British trade embargo. From the Danish West Indies, imported goods from Europe or slaves from Africa would be trans-shipped to other colonies in the Americas. Outgoing exports bound for Europe were shipped under escort by Danish naval vessels via Copenhagen to the European markets.[144]

The free port status greatly increased the flow of trade including slaves through the Danish West Indies. "In May 1758, it was reported that 16 ships at Christiansted in St. Croix belonged to foreigners whereas only 6 belonged to Danish merchants."[145]

The Edict of 1764 − Free Port Status

Upon the end of the Seven Years War in 1763, trade to and through the Danish West Indies decreased as the embargo by Great Britain was lifted. In addition, many of the decrees issued during the war instilling free port policies were specific to the war. To ensure continued growth of trade in the Danish West Indies, the Crown issued an edict on April 9, 1764, that codified free port policies for the islands of St. Thomas and St.

[143] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 579.

[144] Jensen and Simonsen, "Introduction: The Historiography of Slavery," 167.

[145] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 579.

John.[146] The decree was a deliberate change to Denmark's traditional mercantilist policies. It recognized that St. Croix had become the primary colonies island for plantations and agriculture. St. Thomas and St. John needed policies to encourage open commerce to continue their growth as the primary trade ports.[147] From 1764 Danish, the ports continued to be open to commerce and to the slave trade for all Danish citizens. In addition, foreign vessels were also allowed to import slaves from Africa and to obtain an export license for sugar and cotton as payment for those slaves.[148]

The intent was that the sugar and cotton that was used as payment for imported slaves by foreign ships had to be exported on the same foreign ship that embarked the slaves sold and on its immediate outward voyage. However, the foreign ships often arrived during times of the year when the sugar and cotton crops were not ready for harvest. According to Green-Pedersen, "it was recommended in the notes to the Christiansted customs ledgers for 1765 that other ships should be permitted to export the return cargoes of sugar and cotton."[149] This was granted, and effectively this meant that foreign ships could sell their slaves in the Danish West Indies at any time while they made arrangements for other foreign ships to export their share of sugar or cotton from

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[146] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 579.

[147] "The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports in the Northeastern Caribbean: Continuity and Change," in *Dutch Atlantic Connections, 1680-1800: Linking Empires, Bridging Borders* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 282.

[148] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 152.

[149] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 153.

the colonies. This had the effect of creating a vibrant trade market between foreign merchants.

This new legislation making the Danish West Indies harbor a free port encouraged slave trade and other economic activities.[150] Slaves arriving aboard foreign vessels were taxable on import but were exempt from duty if re-exported. However, there was one condition for the tax exemption on re-export. The requirement was that the slaves had first to work in the local plantations before they were available for re-exportation to other places. This created an immediate demand for new slaves for the plantations who were brought to replace other slaves to be re-exported.[151] This is important to note, as the number of slaves *within* the Danish West Indies at any given time during this period does not accurately portray the number of slaves transported *through* the colony.

The port of the Danish West Indies was now handling slave ships from all nations and business was booming for the Danish colony; hence, Westergaard coined the term "palmy days."[152]

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[150] Jensen and Simonsen, "Introduction: The Historiography of Slavery," 174.

[151] Eddie Donoghue, *African Slavery: Slave Society and Slave Life in the Danish West Indies* (Bloomington: Author House, 2007), 146.

[152] Westergaard, *Danish West Indies under Company Rule*, 282.

The Edict of 1777

In 1777 the Crown resumed direct control of the forts on the Danish Gold Coast.[153] In 1776, the British colonies revolted against Britain. France joined the American Revolution on the side of the British colonists in 1778. The Crown felt they could profit off of this conflict. So, they re-instituted many of the trade restrictions that were eliminated by the Edict of 1764.[154]

The edict of 1777 prohibited the disembarkation of slaves into the Danish West Indies from any foreign ship. It further required that all sugar exported from the Danish colonies be sent to Denmark. Only Danish-built, Danish registered ships operated by Danish citizens residing in Europe could participate in both the embarkation of slaves in the Danish Gold Coast of Africa and the disembarkation of slaves in the Danish West Indies. Lastly, all trade between the Danish West Indies and Europe, except Denmark, was strictly forbidden.[155] Denmark believed they could take advantage of the American Revolution conflict to actively import commodities into the Danish West Indies from the British and French colonies; in particular coffee from the French Saint-Domingue.[156] These commodities could then be exported to Denmark for a profit. "During its short existence, the (Company) contributed to making Copenhagen a major center for the re-

[153] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 581.

[154] Dookhan, *A History of the Virgin Islands*, 92.

[155] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 19.

[156] Dookhan, *A History of the Virgin Islands*, 92.

exportation of coffee in the Baltic, but (the Company) was also riddled with administrative problems and financial vagaries[157]

Ultimately, the monopolistic restrictions became difficult to enforce and manage, and overall trade was negatively affected. The restrictions were removed in early 1782.[158]

American War of Independence 1776-1783

As noted earlier, the West Indies was strategically positioned for the transatlantic trade, and it was the route that was relied on by almost all the traders. Countries used the Caribbean as the leeway for their imports and exports to America and Europe. Since Denmark had remained neutral in the war, countries were comfortable to pass their products, mostly slaves, through the West Indies. As a result, the Danish West Indies thrived. In 1781 for example, St. Thomas was one of the most critical entry points in the West Indies handling at least four hundred ships.[159] During the war years, the Royal Danish West India Company, the Baltic-Guinea Company and even the Royal Greenland Trading Company, who sent thirty-seven voyages to the West Indies themselves, were able to profit.[160]

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[157] Jordan, *Born Black in the U.S.A.*, 293.

[158] Dookhan, *A History of the Virgin Islands*, 92.

[159] Arnold Highfield and George F. Tyson, ed., *Negotiating Enslavement: Perspectives on Slavery in the Danish West Indies* (St. Croix: Antilles Press, 2009), 229.

[160] "The Danish West-Indies – Sources of history," Danish National Archives, accessed May 1, 2018, https://www.virgin-islands-history.org/en/history/trade-and-shipping/trading-companies-in-the-west-indies/.

The American War of Independence ended by the year 1783. The circumstances that had aided in creating a boom in the Danish West Indies suddenly stopped halting the economic benefits that had been previously witnessed. For instance, St. Thomas moved from playing host to four hundred ships to only five ships by the year 1785.[161] The Royal Danish West India Company and the Baltic-Guinea Company had much success during the war but were doomed by the return of peace.

During the war, Denmark was conducting business with the French in the Caribbean region. After the war, France banned foreign vessels from the French West Indies. Various countries followed suit and enhanced various pre-war trade restrictions dealing a considerable blow to the Danish.

The decrees and edicts allowing the Danish West Indies to be a free port played a crucial role in increasing the number of slaves used for agriculture while simultaneously developing the Danish West Indies as a major port of commerce and slave auction site for trans-shipment throughout the Americas.[162]

The Edict of 1785

The most significant impact to the establishment of the Danish West Indies as the major slave market in the Caribbean occurred in 1785. The slave trade in the Danish West Indies had been contracted to the Royal Danish West India Company in 1778.

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[161] Bastian, "A Question of Custody," 74.

[162] Brondsted, *The Danish West Indies*, 203.

While many of the trade restrictions on goods had been removed in 1782, the restriction that slaves could only be carried to the Danish West Indies on Danish ships remained.

The Company's board recognized that there was a growing demand for slaves throughout the Caribbean. In a company document dated April 14, 1784, it is stated: "that over 20-25,000 slaves are needed in the Spanish islands and in the French island of Saint Domingue, and that the Spaniards especially are eager to buy."[163] It was the Company's position that opening the Danish West Indies to slave trade from all nations would increase the overall trade and revenue of the islands.[164] With the encouragement and lobbying of the Company, the Crown issued an edict on February 2, 1785, allowing all foreigners on ships of any nation to buy and sell slaves in the Danish West Indies exempt from duty.[165]

The Danish objective was to establish the islands as "a center of the transit slave trade."[166]

Edict of 1792 − Abolition of Slave Trade

Denmark's monarch Christian VII signed a new decree in March 1792. The transatlantic trade in black slaves under the Danish flag was to end. The abolition decree was not to be put into action for ten years, in the year 1803. The "trade in blacks" decree

[163] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 159.

[164] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 159.

[165] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 159.

[166] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 55.

of 1792 triggered slave importation in large numbers as the islands needed to have a stable supply of laborers before the banning of the trade would take place.[167] The national government additionally supported the slave trade financially so that the laborer population could enlarge and become balanced regarding age and gender. The plantation owners were given loans and other incentives to purchase slaves in bulk. Due to this factor, the slave population in the Danish West Indies grew to 36,000 from 28,000 between 1792 and 1803.[168]

During times where Danish promoted free trade by all nations in the Danish West Indies, slave markets in the colonies were a large industry. While slaves were disembarked in the Danish West Indies for use on the plantations of the islands, a much larger number of African slaves moved through the Danish West Indies and the slave markets there for trans-shipment to other colonies throughout the Americas.

The Danish West Indies as a Primary Slave Market for the Americas

Originally slaves were brought into the Danish West Indies from the Danish Gold Coast of Africa in order to supply labor to the plantations on the island. As the Danish West Indies transformed to become the world's leading sugar producer, the demands for labor continued to rise. While the demand for slaves increased, the Danish management of slave forts was often less than optimal, causing a scarcity of slaves in the Danish forts for Danish vessels. In fact, records show that Fort Christiansborg shipped 358 slaves in

[167] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 175-176.

[168] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 588.

the year 1778. The total number of slaves purchased from the Danish forts were around 500 in 1777, 1300 in 1786.[169] These numbers would not sustain the demand for slaves in the colony. However, as trade restrictions loosened and the Danish West Indies became known as a free trade port; the islands slave markets grew. The edict of 1785 opened the slave trade in the Danish West Indies to all nations. African slaves would be imported to the Danish West Indies and sold. Some would be sold to local owners to work in the Danish West Indies. However, large numbers of slaves would be embarked to other colonies and countries throughout the Americas.

From 1785 through 1790 seventy-five percent of the slaves brought to the Danish West Indies were exported to other islands in the Caribbean with large numbers going to Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Santo Domingo. In addition, slaves were being imported from the Dutch, English, and French Caribbean colonies and trans-shipped through the Danish West Indies and sold to the Spanish colonies in the Americas.[170] "The surviving customs accounts show, for example, that a total of 26,658 slaves in transit passed through the free port on St. Thomas between 1789 and 1807."[171]

Once the slaves shipped from Africa arrived in the Danish West Indies, they were auctioned to the highest bidders.[172] This means that slave families were split, with the

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[169] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 149-197.

[170] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 55.

[171] Svend E. Green-Pedersen, "Colonial Trade under the Danish Flag," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 5, no. 1-4 (1980): 103-104.

[172] Annette B. Ramírez de Arellano, "Encountering the Viper: Edward Bliss Emerson and Slavery," *Qualitative Report* 19, no. 16 (2014): 58.

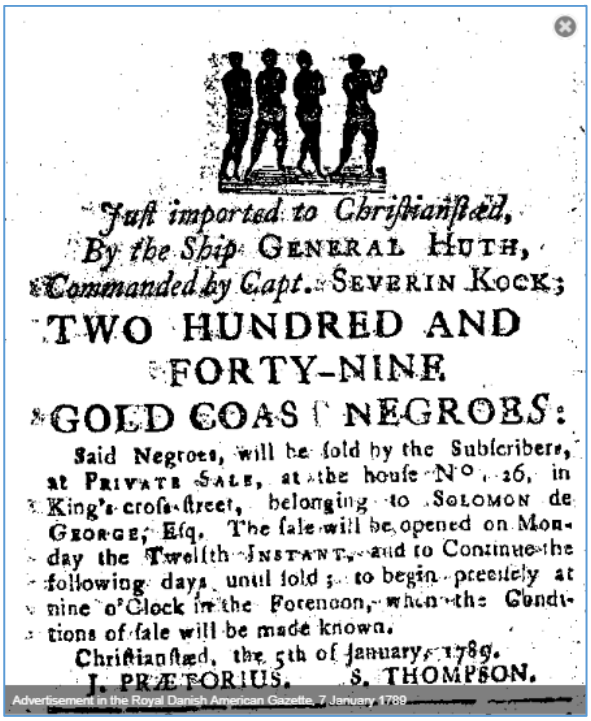
various members being purchased by different plantations in the islands or sent to different colonies completely. Hassel Island, located on the western edge of the port of Charlotte Amalie, was one of the more significant commercial ports in the Danish West Indies. Hassel Island, whose owner from 1728 to 1744 was Willem Berentz, owned large plantations on St. Thomas. Records show that the number of enslaved Africans kept by Berentz exceeded the number kept by the previous owners of the island.[173] Berentz purchased Hassel Island as a mechanism to participate in the slave trade. He used Hassel Island, basically, as a staging area. He could buy slave on their arrival to the Danish West Indies and place them temporarily on Hassel island plantations for them to adapt to the diseases and the climate of their new environment, after which he would sell the stronger ones at the slave market. Berentz did not only sell these slaves to slave owners in the Danish West Indies, but also to the rest of the Caribbean. Purchasing new slaves was a profitable business because they could be purchased at a lower cost and sold at a much higher price once they got accustomed to the environment and acquired plantation skills.[174]

[173] Andreas Latif and Martens Maria Vibe, *Hassel Island 1688-1801, an Unusual Plantation* (Copenhagen: Prepared for the National Park Service, US Virgin Islands), accessed March 14, 2018, http://www.hasselisland.org/wp-content/uploads/ Hassel-Island-Danish-Report.pdf.

[174] Latif and Vibe, *Hassel Island*, 20.

During this period, the Danish West Indies developed into the major slave trading market for the Caribbean. The Danish West India and Guinea Company warehouses located in Christiansted on St. Croix were one location where many major slave auctions took place. The warehouse was the headquarters for the Company and was also the location where slaves were temporarily housed after disembarkation.[175] The courtyard of the warehouse was known to host the most significant slave auctions across the Caribbean.[176] The auctions would be advertised as shown in Figure 4 well in advance both in the newspapers and by help shouting and using drums in the streets to garner attention. "The auction itself might occur just as we know a public auction today, in which the goods are sold one by one to the highest bidder."[177]

Figure 4 Advertisement for Slave Auction courtesy Danish National Archives


Just imported to Chriſtianſted,
By the Ship GENERAL HUTH,
Commanded by Capt. SEVERIN KOCK;
TWO HUNDRED AND
FORTY-NINE
GOLD COAST NEGROES:
Said Negroes, will be ſold by the Subſcribers, at PRIVATE SALE, at the houſe N° 26, in King's croſs-ſtreet, belonging to SOLOMON de GEORGE, Eſq. The ſale will be opened on Monday the Twelfth INSTANT, and to Continue the following days, until ſold; to begin preciſely at nine o'Clock in the Forenoon, when the Conditions of ſale will be made known.
Chriſtianſted, the 5th of January, 1789.
J. PRÆTORIUS. S. THOMPSON.
Advertisement in the Royal Danish American Gazette, 7 January 1789

[175] de Arellano, "Encountering the Viper," 58.

[176] Jeppe Mulich, "Microregionalism and Intercolonial Relations: The Case of the Danish West Indies 1730-1830," *Journal of Global History* 8 (2013): 84.

[177] "Timeline on the Danish Slave Trade," Danish National Archives, accessed Feb. 23, 2018, http://www.tiki-toki.com/timeline/entry/493514/THE-DANISH-NATIONAL-ARCHIVES-Timeline-on-the-Danish-slave-trade/#vars!panel=5083149!.

All three islands of the Danish West Indies emerged to host some of the largest slave auctions worldwide. Consequently, slave markets in the Danish West Indies became its own industry. According to Svend Green-Pedersen: "Fewer than 1,600 out of nearly 26,700 slaves reaching the free port of St. Thomas were purchased for employment in the islands themselves."[178]

Slave Life in the Danish West Indies

In this section, we review the existing academic thought on slave life in the Danish West Indies. How were slaves utilized in the Danish West Indies both in agriculture and commerce? What rights did slaves have? Social life? Education?

The terrain of the island of St. Thomas is mountainous with very few level spots or plateaus. Establishing plantations on the island was always problematic due to the terrain. However, it had a large, deep and accessible harbor at Charlotte Amalie. In contrast, St. Croix is three times the size of St. Thomas with terrain that is flat. St. Thomas became the hub for trade in the Danish West Indies and St. Croix became the main island for plantation development and output.[179] The role of slaves in the colonies was thus different between the islands.

Once St. Croix was purchased, all the timbered lowland was quickly cleared and covered with sugar plantations. In 1751 the Danish had claimed all the fertile and arable land and at least 64 sugar plantations were in full operation. The timber clearance and the

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[178] Green-Pedersen, *The Scope and Structure*, 163.

[179] Bastian, "A Question of Custody," 99.

sugar plantations were operated by the African slaves brought to the islands. As a result, in 1755 the three islands were inhabited by 14,877 enslaved individuals, and the number rose to 32,213 by 1797.[180]

While Danish and American academic sources address the mechanics and economics of slavery, authors with ties to the Danish West Indies tend to address slave life. The West Indian historian Neville Hall published numerous articles and research on aspects of slave life in the West Indies. Using Professor Hall's original notes, outlines, and unfinished manuscripts B.W. Higman edited and published *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies: St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix* in 1992. Hall views slavery as the foundation to colonial society and spends much time discussing the ratio of whites to slaves and the systems and social relations between whites and slaves that allowed them to co-exist in the Danish West Indies. Hall describes Denmark's approach to controlling the Danish West Indies as "an empire without dominion."[181] Denmark lacked the population, wealth, and the maritime and military resources of the other colonial powers. With this weak central control from Denmark, the plantation owners and merchant elite had great autonomy to implement their slavery ideology in law and social systems.

Hall also discusses the activities of slaves during their discretionary time including attending a Christian church, plantation owners providing additional time off to cultivate personal gardens to supplement food rations, the establishment of slave merchant markets on Saturday and wide-spread dancing events. Hall implies that the

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[180] Jensen and Simonsen, "Introduction: The Historiography of Slavery," 174.

[181] Hall, *Slave Society*, 33.

discretionary time provided kept in check the slave's desire for total freedom: "by the use of the discretionary time…created certain modes of being and behavior that were distinctly theirs."[182]

The concept of New World Slavery also known as the Slave Code began in 1733 where the colonialists started subjecting slaves to extremely harsh conditions.[183] The New World Slavery ideology was made official by a French Governor, Philip Gardelin, who pronounced stiff actions taken against any slave who threatened a white person. His theories on slave punishment became known as "the Gardelin code, which authorized severe capital punishment of slaves."[184] Some of the punitive measures included pinching the slave with red-hot iron tongs and thereafter hanging if the white so desired. Rebel slaves were burnt alive, or their backs were broken to allow them to die slowly. The transatlantic slave trade also had a direct impact on the need for a slave code, as the triangular trade had significantly increased the supply of slaves around the Caribbean region and in America. This increased slave population necessitated policies for control.[185] As such, the colonialists capitalized on this increased supply of slaves by misusing slaves and replacing them with new ones. The death rate of African slaves was quite high as compared to the birth rates, especially under the new harsh conditions. For instance, St. Croix had 48 slaves working on a 150 acres plantation. Irrespective of being

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[182] Hall, *Slave Society*, 68.

[183] Brondsted, *The Danish West Indies*, 23.

[184] Hall, *Slave Society*, 57.

[185] Brondsted, *The Danish West Indies*, 23.

understaffed, the slaves had even longer days that could begin from 5 a.m. in the morning to 7 p.m. at night.[186]

At first, a type of Gardelin code was implemented in the Danish West Indies. Some privileges previously given to the slaves such as allowing slaves to take their produce to sell at the Sunday market were gradually lifted. The prices of land rose due to the economic activities and slaves could no longer afford to purchase their personal gardens. As a result, the slaves' nutritional standards declined, for planters tended to enlarge the area planted in sugar at the expense of the slaves' garden plots and to supply more of the slaves' food themselves.

The Danish colonialists had more empathy and concern for their slaves and, notably, Denmark did not follow this trend to harsher slave punishment.[187] The Danish went against the prevailing trend by banning the Gardelin Code within their colonies. The Board of Trade felt that the slave masters had a responsibility towards their slaves such as basic rations of food and clothing.[188] In 1755, the Board passed an act that required slave masters to provide basic commodities to their slaves. The Board of Trade also forbids slave masters from killing a slave arbitrarily or even to separate married slaves. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Danish West Indies leadership began looking into the issue

[186] Figueredo, *Negotiating Enslavement*, 127.

[187] Rawley and Behrendt, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 50.

[188] Donoghue, *African Slavery*, 37.

of understaffing and overworking of slaves. For instance, the number of slaves working at St. John Island was increased to 1,087 against 208 whites on the island.[189]

Denmark's technical participation in the slave trade ended in 1803, however, slave ownership was not allowed until later in the century. However, slave life while still abhorrent, continued to improve under the Danish. "During the 1830s a number of restrictions had been placed on the institution of slave ownership, including a strict limit on slaves' workday hours; a substantial reduction in owners' discretionary punishment powers; the banning of public slave auctions; and the mandatory maintenance of journals for regular government inspection."[190] In the 1840s, plantation owners were forced by the Danish government to further the rights of their slaves. Slaves had already been given a free day, Sunday. This was moved to Saturday and slave owners were required to now give Sunday to the slaves for "religious observation and secular instruction."[191] This gave the slave population in the Danish West Indies both Saturday and Sunday off. While this may seem noble, it was an attempt by the Danish to prevent the need for total abolition of slave ownership.[192]

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[189] Highfield and George F. Tyson, *Negotiating Enslavement*, 157.

[190] Helen Richards. "Distant Garden: Moravian Missions and the Culture Of Slavery in the Danish West Indies, 1732-1848." *Journal of Moravian History*, no. 2 (2007), 69.

[191] Richards, "Distant Garden," 69.

[192] Richards, "Distant Garden," 69.

Significant to slave life in the Danish West Indies was the role of manumission and freedmen. Denmark followed the tradition of manumission, giving a slave its freedom upon demonstrating individual contributions to the slave owner or to the state that was deserving of the slave's freedom.[193] Denmark's implementation of manumission was considerably more liberal than other slave trading nations. By 1815 freedmen accounted for 55% of the total free population of the island and had their own wealth and political and social activity.[194]

The freedmen population on the islands experienced significant growth tripling in population from 1797 to 1815. 5,035 freedmen were registered on the island in 1815 as shown in Table 3 compared to 4,123 whites and 31,029 slaves. By 1815, freedmen and slaves outnumbered whites by a ratio of 9:1.[195]

Table 3 Danish West Indies Population Composition 1688 – 1846 courtesy Hall, 5.

Year	St. Croix			St. Thomas			St. John		
	Slaves	Whites	Freed-men	Slaves	Whites	Freed-men	Slaves	Whites	Freed-men
1688				422	317				
1691				547	389				
1715				3,042	555				
1733				**	**	**	1,087	208	**
1755	8,897	1,303*	*	3,949	325	138	2,031	213*	*
1770	18,884	1,515	**	4,338	428	67	2,302	118	**
1789	22,488	1,952	953	4,614	492	160	2,200	167	16
1797	25,452	2,223	1,164	4,769	726	239	1,992	113	15
1815	24,330	1,840	2,480	4,393	2,122	2,284	2,306	157	271
1835	19,876	6,805*	*	5,315	8,707*	*	1,943	532*	*
1846	16,706	7,359*	*	3,494	9,579*	*	1,790	660*	*

[193] Hall, *Slave Society*, 139-140.

[194] Hall, *Slave Society*, 85-112.

[195] Hall, *Slave Society*, 157.

In fact, the freedmen became so prevalent in the economic life of the island; they advanced the freedmen petition of 1816 demanding "the same civic rights and privileges as the white population."[196]

Life as a slave in the Danish West Indies was accompanied by brutal punishments, hard work, powerlessness, the presence of constant deaths, and work injuries.[197] However, slave life did improve in the mid-1800's when slaves were given some rights and manumission created a large freedmen population

Danish Slave Trade by the Numbers

The existing historiography of Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade is very specific to the number of slaves embarked and disembarked by Denmark into the Americas and the resulting rank of Denmark in comparison to other slave trading nations. In this section, the numbers commonly associated with Denmark's participation are reviewed.

Denmark's Commonly Published Transatlantic Slave Trade Numbers

The existing academic work concludes that between the years 1502 and 1870 of the twelve million African slaves who were embarked from Africa to the Americas, Denmark was the 7th largest slave-trading nation accounting for less than 1% of the

[196] Jordan, *Born Black in the U.S.A.*, 305.

[197] Jensen, "For the Health," 1-2.

Africans embarked.[198] This is dwarfed largely by the involvement of England, Portugal, and Spain in the slave trade during the same time period.

James Rawley with Stephen Behrendt first published *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History* in 1981 with a significant revision in 2005. Used extensively in U.S. education circles, it is foundational reading on the general transatlantic slave trade, including a discussion on the major colonial powers involved, the epidemiology and politics of the slave trade and the impact slave trade to the Americas had on the European commercial revolution. The discussion of Danish participation including the slave trade data tables helped solidify the basis for current perception of Danish involvement in the slave trade. Rawley and Behrendt state that "Danes introduced into their islands about 123,000 slaves."[199] This number of 123,000 is extrapolated by Rawley using Green-Pedersen's analysis of, according to Rawley, "53,000 slaves imported between 1733 and 1802" and "reexporting about 70,000 slaves."[200] Rawley provides no analysis of how or where the 70,000 export number was calculated. And, several academics including Lovejoy have pointed out that "James Rawley, following a different procedure, makes the

[198] Gøbel, *The Danish Slave Trade*, 10.

[199] Rawley and Behrendt, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 87.

[200] Rawley and Behrendt, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 87.

same mistake of mixing data which overlap."[201] However, Rawley's number of 123,000 is often referred to and is cited at least 413 times by other authors.[202]

In today's historiography, of the 12+ million slaves of the Atlantic slave trade, the number range most associated with Denmark is between 110,000 to 125,000.

Westergaard – Published 1917

The American academic Waldemar Westergaard published in 1917 *The Danish West Indies under Company Rule (1671–1754): With a Supplementary Chapter, 1755–1917.* The work focused on the early history of the Danish West Indies and was one of the first academic works on the Danish West Indies and, therefore, had a lasting influence on the overall perception of Danish involvement in the slave trade.

Westergaard found the archives of the Danish West India and Guinea Company intact in the Danish archives building near Christiansborg castle in Denmark. Using those archives, he concluded that from 1687 to 1754 the Danish disembarked 16,889 slaves into the Danish West Indies.[203] It should be noted that Westergaard specifically counts only slaves disembarked into the colony for labor. He does not address any slaves trans-shipped through the Danish West Indies to other colonies. His number is also based on slaves disembarked. In this same study, Westergaard does discuss mortality rates during

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[201] Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Synthesis," *Journal of African History* 23, no. 4 (1982): 476.

[202] "Google Scholar," accessed on July 18, 2018, https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=RAYPJYsAAAAJ&hl=en

[203] Westergaard, *Danish West Indies under Company Rule*, 320-326.

transport. On voyages from 1698 to 1733, Westergaard shows mortality rates for specific voyages between 10 and 55%[204]. He does not extrapolate these mortality rates to determine an overall number of slaves the Danish embarked from Africa.

The importance of Westergaard's published research and numbers cannot be overstated as it provided the basis for the understanding of the Danish participation in the slave trade for the greater part of the 20th century. In Westergaard's own words "The role played by Denmark-Norway in tropical colonization was indeed not large and not infrequently the interest of the English-or American-reader."[205]

Curtain – Published 1969

Philip de Armind Curtin of John Hopkins University in 1969 wrote *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*. It was one of the first comprehensive analysis and estimate of the size of the transatlantic slave trade. Estimating that a total of 9,566,000 slaves were imported into the Americas, his analysis provided the baseline for other academics to compare. Curtin's conclusion of the Danish numbers is very low. He simply refers to Westergaard's analysis and extends the math for the remaining years and concludes "a total estimate for the whole period of the slave trade in the neighborhood of 28,000."[206] It

[204] Westergaard, *Danish West Indies under Company Rule*, 144.

[205] Westergaard, *Danish West Indies under Company Rule*, vi.

[206] Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 86.

is due to these types of conclusions that lack deep analysis that has resulted in Curtin's work often being portrayed negatively.

Svend E. Green-Pedersen – Published 1971

Svend Erik Green-Pedersen did the first real update to Westergaard's numerical analysis of the Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade with his publication of "The Scope and Structure of the Danish Negro Slave Trade," in *Scandinavian Economic History Review* in 1971.[207] At the time of the writing, Green-Pedersen was a Research Fellow at the University of Aarhus. Green-Pedersen's numbers are cited by Rawley and are one of the most often cited numbers concerning the Danish slave trade. Green-Pedersen recognizes that the Danish slave trade differed from the mercantilism of other colonial powers. He recognized that the "Danish slave trade embraced three branches: slaves imported into St. Croix for employment, a transit slave trade at St. Thomas and triangular slave trade."[208]

Using archival material available at that time primarily from the Great Negro Trade Commission of Denmark, Green-Pedersen concludes that 58,421 slaves were disembarked in the Danish West Indies from 1766-1807. Green-Pedersen does not address slave imports for previous years.

[207] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 149-197.

[208] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 149.

Table 4 Green-Pedersen Analysis

Green-Pederson Analysis of Slave Import and Export from the Danish West Indies					
Location	**Dates**	**Imported**	**Exported**	**Retained**	**Green-Pederson Table**
Christiansted	1766-1802	25600	6543	19057	Table 1
Frederiksted	1767-1802	4550	1033	3517	Table 2
St. Thomas	1785-1790	1613	1322	291	Table 6
St. Thomas	1789-1807	26658	22064	4564	Table 7
TOTAL		58421	30962	27429	

Lovejoy – Published 1982

Another often quoted study of the Danish slave numbers is that of Paul E. Lovejoy who wrote The Volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Synthesis in The Journal of African History in 1982.[209] Lovejoy's analysis used Curtain's findings for pre-1700 data and combined those numbers with "a variety of scholars for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries."[210] For most of the 18th century, which comprises the majority of the total, Lovejoy relies on actual shipping data analyzed by David Eltis. Lovejoy's analysis yields an estimate of the Atlantic slave trade of 11,698,000 slaves exported from Africa and 9,778,500 imported into the Americas between 1450 and 1900.[211] Lovejoy estimates the Danish slave trade from 1701 to 1800 at 72,000 slaves exported by the Danish from Africa. Lovejoy also estimates that the Swedish and Brandenburg's exported

[209] Lovejoy, "The Volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade," 473-501.

[210] Lovejoy, "The Volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade," 477.

[211] Lovejoy, "The Volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade," 477.

an additional 5,000.[212] For our comparison, Lovejoy's numbers for Danish participation would sum to 77,000.

Per Hernaes – Published 1995

The work of Per O. Hernaes is significant as it is the foundation still of many current estimates of the size of the Danish Atlantic slave trade. In 1995, Hernaes published *Slaves, Danes, and African Coast Society. The Danish Slave Trade from West Africa and Afro-Danish Relations on the 18th-Century Gold Coast.* In his 1995 book, Hernaes gives an extensive critique of the flaws of the methodology and analysis of Curtin, Green-Pedersen, and others. Using more extensive documents available in the Danish archives, he revises the analysis done by Green-Pedersen.

In this work, Hernaes estimates that between the 1670s and 1803, an estimated 85,000 slaves were shipped from West Africa especially the Gold Coast through the Atlantic Ocean on-board ships under Danish flag.[213] Hernaes also recognizes that the slave trade to the Danish West Indies did not completely stop upon the Danish abolition of the slave trade in 1803. "Slave imports to the Danish West Indies also continued after 1803. Probably about 10,000 slaves were landed on the islands in the period 1803–07."[214] Recognizing the complexities of the Danish slave trade as it did not follow the single country triangular trade mercantile theory, Hernaes also concludes that "around 13 000

[212] Lovejoy, "The Volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade," 488.

[213] Per Oluf Hernæs, "Slaves, Danes and African Coast Society," *Trondheim Studies in History* (1998): 232.

[214] Hernaes, "Slaves, Danes and African Coast Society," 232.

slaves were sold to other European slave traders from the Danish-Norwegian fortresses in Africa or transported secretly on the account of individual Dano-Norwegian fort officers."[215]

The three numbers cited above sum to 108,000 and this number is often credited to Per Hernaes for the number of slaves in the Atlantic slave trade attributed to Denmark.

Transatlantic Slave Trade Database (TSTD or Voyages) – available since 1999

The TSTD is a multi-source database of slave voyages that is maintained by Emory University. The significance is that the database contains voyage specific shipping data amassed and data standardized from archives around the world rather than estimates or assumptions derived by individuals.[216] When released in 1999 on CD-ROM, the database had 27,233 voyage records. Significant work has been done by numerous academics and researchers to enhance further and complete the database. Of note, sixty percent of the slave voyages in the TSTD contain information unavailable in 1999. The current TSTD database contains 36,001 voyages.[217] A grant by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for Afro-American Research at Harvard to Emory University has allowed the TSTD to be accessed via the Internet. The now named Voyages database can be accessed at http://www.slavevoyages.org/.

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[215] Hernaes, 232.

[216] David Eltis, "The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment," *William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2001): 18.

[217] "Voyages – The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database," Emory University, accessed June 23, 2018, http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/download.

In the TSTD estimates, Danish voyages are combined with voyages by Brandenburg and Sweden. As noted earlier, Brandenburg for most of its operation served as a proxy for the Danish embarking slaves from Africa to the Danish West Indies. This inclusion is consistent with Danish participation. Sweden's participation in the transatlantic slave trade was minimal, and in 1663 Denmark took control of the Swedish forts in Africa. Inclusion under a Danish umbrella in the TSTD is warranted.

According to the TSTD out of a total of 12,521,337, the estimate of slaves embarked in Africa by Denmark is 111,040 as shown in Table 5.[218]

Table 5 TSTD Slaves Embarked in Africa

	Spain / Uruguay	Portugal / Brazil	Great Britain	Netherlands	U.S.A.	France	Denmark / Baltic	Totals
1501-1525	6,363	7,000	0	0	0	0	0	13,363
1526-1550	25,375	25,387	0	0	0	0	0	50,762
1551-1575	28,167	31,089	1,685	0	0	66	0	61,007
1576-1600	60,056	90,715	237	1,365	0	0	0	152,373
1601-1625	83,496	267,519	0	1,829	0	0	0	352,844
1626-1650	44,313	201,609	33,695	31,729	824	1,827	1,053	315,050
1651-1675	12,601	244,793	122,367	100,526	0	7,125	653	488,065
1676-1700	5,860	297,272	272,200	85,847	3,327	29,484	25,685	719,675
1701-1725	0	474,447	410,597	73,816	3,277	120,939	5,833	1,088,909
1726-1750	0	536,696	554,042	83,095	34,004	259,095	4,793	1,471,725
1751-1775	4,239	528,693	832,047	132,330	84,580	325,918	17,508	1,925,315
1776-1800	6,415	673,167	748,612	40,773	67,443	433,061	39,199	2,008,670
1801-1825	168,087	1,160,601	283,959	2,669	109,545	135,815	16,316	1,876,992
1826-1850	400,728	1,299,969	0	357	1,850	68,074	0	1,770,978
1851-1875	215,824	9,309	0	0	476	0	0	225,609
Totals	1,061,524	5,848,266	3,259,441	554,336	305,326	1,381,404	111,040	12,521,337

According to the TSTD out of a total of 10,702,657, the estimate of slaves disembarked by Denmark in the Danish West Indies is 91,733 as shown in Table 6.[219]

Table 6 TSTD Slaves Disembarked in the Americas

[218] "Voyages – The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database," Emory University, accessed June 23, 2018, http://www.slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates.

[219] "Voyages – The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database," Emory University, accessed June 23, 2018, http://www.slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates.

	Spain / Uruguay	Portugal / Brazil	Great Britain	Netherlands	U.S.A.	France	Denmark / Baltic	Totals
1501-1525	4,462	4,914	0	0	0	0	0	9,376
1526-1550	17,763	17,771	0	0	0	0	0	35,534
1551-1575	19,720	22,174	1,188	0	0	50	0	43,132
1576-1600	42,037	67,879	168	1,160	0	0	0	111,244
1601-1625	58,445	214,808	0	1,577	0	0	0	274,830
1626-1650	31,422	166,017	26,315	26,106	702	1,479	836	252,877
1651-1675	9,464	209,690	93,209	81,918	0	5,456	544	400,281
1676-1700	4,670	261,523	208,431	74,878	2,548	22,265	20,374	594,689
1701-1725	0	421,232	339,007	62,477	2,612	95,357	3,882	924,567
1726-1750	0	470,236	455,284	71,268	27,500	216,213	3,820	1,244,321
1751-1775	3,634	476,596	682,454	117,855	70,624	278,479	14,711	1,644,353
1776-1800	5,601	623,298	673,590	35,202	56,601	369,121	33,215	1,796,628
1801-1825	151,367	1,037,342	253,678	2,475	89,990	117,969	14,351	1,667,172
1826-1850	354,813	1,099,018	0	324	1,662	58,579	0	1,514,396
1851-1875	181,526	7,318	0	0	413	0	0	189,257
Totals	884,924	5,099,816	2,733,324	475,240	252,652	1,164,968	91,733	10,702,657

The TSTD database allows academics to move the conversation from opinion to a "debate over volume and direction on vessel-by-vessel shipping data."[220] Today, the Voyages database estimates are utilized by most individuals researching this topic and are utilized in most academic papers.

Population and Census Counts

The Danish kept impeccable records, many which have survived over the years archived at the Danish National Archive in Copenhagen. This includes tax-roll counts within the Danish West Indies. As shown in Table 7, the total population of the Danish West Indies was 16,856 in 1755 and consisted of a ratio of slaves to whites of 8:1. By 1815, the population had increased to 40,183, and the ratio of slaves to whites was 7:5. However, by 1815 the number of freedmen, African descendants who were now free

[220] Eltis, "The Volume and Structure," 29-30.

either through manumission or birth, was now 5,035 outnumbering the whites on the islands.

Table 7 Population Counts of the Danish West Indies[221]

St. Croix	Year	Slaves	Whites	Freedmen	Total
	1755	8897	1303		10200
	1797	25452	2223	1164	28839
	1815	24330	1840	2480	28650
St. Thomas	1755	3949	325	138	4412
	1797	4769	726	239	5734
	1815	4393	2122	2284	8799
St. John	1755	2031	213		2244
	1797	1992	113	15	2120
	1815	2306	157	271	2734
TOTAL	1755	14877	1841	138	16856
	1797	32213	3062	1418	36693
	1815	31029	4119	5035	40183

In the 1760s, the enslaved made up nearly 90% of the total population in the Danish West Indies. During the 1790s, there were roughly thirty thousand slaves in the Danish West Indies, which adds up to somewhat less than two percent of the total number of slaves in the Caribbean.[222] As these population counts are derived from tax rolls, they consist of individuals with permanent residence on the island. They do not include slaves

[221] Hall, *Slave Society*, 5.

[222] Paul Rood, *Selected Records of the Danish West Indies, 1672–1917: Essential Records Concerning Slavery and Emancipation* (Washington, DC: National Archives microfilm publications, 2002), 2-3.

that made their way through the Danish West Indies slave markets and were being sold and trans-shipped through the Danish West Indies to other locations in the Americas.

The current, consensus historiography of Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade is that participation was marginal in comparison to the other European colonial powers. Of the scholars that have attempted to quantify the Danish participation in the slave trade, most have produced a number that is less than 100,000 enslaved Africans. Though the most recent source, the TSTD, places the number at 111,040. While the numbers are not direct comparisons as various scholars analysis are for various dates of the slave trade, their conclusions are; Westergaard 16,889, Curtain 28,000, Green-Pedersen 58,421, Lovejoy 77,000, Per Hernaes 108,000 and TSTD 111,040.

Economic Impact of the Slave Trade for Denmark

In this section, we want to attempt to quantify the economic impact of slave trading for Denmark. What was the economic impact for the monarchy or prominent citizens from exporting slaves from Africa and importing them to the Danish West Indies? What was the economic impact for Denmark overall?

Profitability of the Direct Slave Trade

Whether the direct slave trade, purchase of slaves in the Danish Gold Coast and selling them in the Danish West Indies, was profitable is still up for debate. There is no consensus. Robert Anstey determined the profitability of the slave trade in Britain and found an annual profit margin of 9.5% between 1761 and 1807. These values were higher than the Dutch slave trade whose profit margin was analyzed between 1741 and 1800 and

was determined to be 2.58% annually.[223] For the Danish slave trade, there are too many dissimilarities to the British or Dutch to apply those calculations. Therefore, the profitability of the direct Danish slave trade can only be made by looking at companies and people involved at a particular time.

The record does show some very profitable transactions both in the early and later ages of the Danish slave trade. The treaty of 1685 allowed the Brandenburg Africa Company and the Danish governor to purchase slaves imported to the Danish West Indies equally and sell them at market prices. "The governor and director appear to have earned profits of between 25 percent and 100 percent from such activities."[224]

However, a review of the various companies that have been chartered to handle the Danish slave trade shows a history of financial losses, closed businesses or bailouts from the monarchy despite many having a monopoly on the trade. The Danish Africa Company of Glückstadt operating between1660 and 1673 experienced large financial losses and was eventually acquired by the Royal Chartered Danish West India and Guinea Company. This Company operated between 1671 and 1754. Due to financial hardships, it had to subcontract its rights to various entities at various times, the Brandenburg Africa Company from 1685 to 1699, Nicholas Jansen Arff from 1689 to 1696 and Jorgen Thormöhlen from 1690 to 1694. Each of these arrangements with the company or individual amassed financial losses. Ultimately, the shareholders of the

[223] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 210-211.

[224] Weindl, "The Slave Trade of Northern Germany," Chap 5.

Royal Chartered Danish West India Company were not satisfied with their returns and convinced the Crown for a bailout; purchase of the outstanding shares of the Company.

These examples continued into the 18th century. By 1734, the directors and stockholders of the Royal Chartered Danish West India and Guinea Company were contemplating whether to continue with the slave trade after having lost 20,000 riksdalers in five years, between 1728 and 1733. In trying to determine whether the direct slave trade was profitable, the directors reviewed the records of a slave ship called Laarburg Galley. The accounts showed that 55,500 riksdalers had been used for fitting the ship and the expense of the actual voyage. After the ship's goods, including slaves, were sold the Company had a loss of 4,700 riksdalers. In addition, between 1697 and 1733, the Company had lost eight of its twenty slave ships.

The Bargum Trading Society, as another example, had to close its doors in 1775 after several of the company's ships were lost at sea and one experienced financial loss from an onboard slave riot. Thus it is difficult to establish that the direct slave trade was a profitable venture.[225]

By the late 18th century, Denmark had a 100-plus year history with the profitability of the Danish slave trade. The crown was actively reviewing its options. "On 4 July 1787, a commission reported that the Danish slave trade would continue to be a

[225] Svend E. Green-Pedersen, "The History of the Danish Negro Slave Trade, 1733-1807: An Interim Survey Relating in Particular to Its Volume, Structure, Profitability and Abolition," *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* 62, no. 226-227 (1975): 211.

hazardous enterprise in which losses were likely, except for the trade with foreign islands."[226]

Impact of the Slave Trade on Denmark's Economy

Slavery was vital to the production of sugar in the Danish West Indies, which was the foundation of Danish colonial objectives. "There is a tight connection between the Dano-Norwegian slave trade and sugar refining, exemplified with the establishment of several sugar refineries in Denmark owned by the West Indian-Guinean Company."[227] Sugar production, as well as sugar trade, was of considerable significance to the Danish balance of trade with other nations. Furthermore, it was of measurable value to the Danish national economy, because a significant portion of the labor force was employed on sugar plantations and industries.[228] "In 1770 there were twelve refineries there (Copenhagen), producing sugar and syrup worth 760,000 rigsdalers.[229]

Denmark was the only nation in the Baltics with a significant presence in the Americas. Therefore, Denmark had an advantage in this part of Europe. Not only was sugar powering the Danish economy, but the surplus was also being sold to Denmark's neighbors bringing in new wealth to the Danish. "Among industrial exports from

[226] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope," 176.

[227] Lavik, "Small Players," 6.

[228] Green-Pedersen, "The History," 213.

[229] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 36.

Copenhagen in 1778 and 1784, refined sugar and syrup accounted for between 80 and 90 percent of the total."[230]

Although sugar farming dominated the plantations, other crops like cotton and food crops like coffee were also present which were exchanged for money or other goods. Some of the more profitable enterprises were the Schimmelmann's sugar plantations in the Danish West Indies as well as his refineries in Denmark. Most of the sugar was marketed in Norway with the year 1793 experiencing highest volume of sales from sugar; 334 000 Riksdaler with 240,000 riksdalers coming from Norway.[231]

One individual who was critical for establishing the trade link between the Danish West Indies and Denmark was Count Johan Hartvig Ernst Bernstorff whom was the foreign minister during the monarchy of Frederik V.[232] "Bernstorff stressed the importance of overseas trade combined with a policy of neutrality."[233] The growth of direct trade from Denmark to the Danish West Indies was dramatic as shown in Table 8.

Table 8 Ships Sailing Direct from Copenhagen to the Danish West Indies

Year	Avg. Ships Per Year
1751-1755	4.2
1756-1760	13.5
1761-1765	23.2
1780	90

[230] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 38.

[231] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 47.

[232] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 37.

[233] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 37.

1781	135
1782	226

By the latter part of the 18th century, the Danish West Indies were integral to the success of the Danish economy. "Imports from the West Indies into Copenhagen in 1782-83 reached 4,498,259 rigsdalers, surpassing those from Europe (2,323,290) for the first time.[234] This was the golden age of commerce for Denmark.

The Downturn of the Danish West Indies Trade

The circumstances that had aided in creating a boom in the Danish West Indies, specifically the wars in the Americas, stopped in 1783 halting the economic benefits that had been previously witnessed. The ripple effects of the end of the American War were harshly felt by the Danish government. The St. Thomas port, which had been the most significant entrepot in the Danish West Indies hosting from 300 to 400 ships annually, received only five ships by 1785.[235] The great Danish overseas trading companies created during the war were doomed by the return of peace. During the war, Denmark was conducting business with the French in the Caribbean region. After the war, France banned foreign vessels from the French West Indies. Various countries followed suit and re-instituted various pre-war trade restrictions dealing a huge blow to the free port of the Danish West Indies. The incomes collected from Copenhagen fell to 490,505 riksdalers in 1787 from 731,689 riksdalers in 1783. Products exported from Copenhagen decreased

[234] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 37.

[235] Bastian, "A Question of Custody," 74.

from 1,503,032 rigsdalers in 1784 to 1,064,057 riksdaler in 1785 and to 609,937 rigsdalers in 1790.[236]

The economic impact of the Danish slave trade is mixed. Undoubtedly, many individuals profited handsomely from both the direct slave trade and aspects of the triangular trade including the sugar industry. The overall impact on the Danish economy was very positive in providing Denmark with a significant positive balance of trade. However, most companies and individuals that handled the direct slave trade between the Danish Gold Coast and the Danish West Indies suffered financially. Ultimately, the Crown had to subsidize this direct slave trade in order for it to provide the labor necessary to achieve the benefits to the overall economy of Denmark.

Denmark's Abolition of the Slave Trade and Emancipation of the Slaves

This section concentrates on existing academic thought on the abolition of the slave trade by Denmark. How did the movement begin? When and how was it implemented? What were the underlying reasons for the eventual emancipation of the slaves?

There were significant changes in the ruling elite by the late 18th century who facilitated the oligarchic nature of Danish absolutism.[237] Particularly, 1784 is known as "perhaps the happiest period" in Danish history where individuals who favored social and political reforms were appointed to the government. The new regime sought to modernize

[236] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 51.

[237] Rawley and Behrendt, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 51.

Danish society and apply to Denmark some of the social and economic ideas of the enlightenment. Progressively, the Danish showed indications that they had the capacity and the will to abolish slavery through new measures that were put in place by the government. Count Ernst Schimmelmann and Count Christian Ditlev Reventlow are among the notable persons who brought significant changes to the Danish rule over West Indies.

Schimmelmann was appointed Denmark's Minister of Finance in 1784 and was head of the Board of Trade and of the Board of Finance while Reventlow was head of the Treasury Department and a member of the Board of Trade.[238] Schimmelmann had inherited his father's plantations in St. Croix with several thousand slaves and some sugar refineries in Norway, and he was also a director to the Royal West India Company.

After the appointment to the government as the Finance Minister, Schimmelmann began to make arrangements that could see better-living conditions for the enslaved laborers. On April 28, 1787, the Board of Finance, headed by Schimmelmann, sent some proposals to the General Customs Department for its considerations on improving the slaves living conditions.[239] Schimmelmann was perturbed by the extensive decline in the number of slaves that was witnessed in the West Indies. Poor living conditions, hard labor, and diseases were some of the common causes of these deaths. Schimmelmann wanted to emancipate the slaves' plight and improve their living conditions. As a result, the General Customs Department to obtain suggestions from the government of the

[238] Vibæk, *Danish West Indies*, 12.

[239] Bantekas, 27.

Danish West Indies and on May 15 sent the Finance Department's letter on to St. Croix. Surprisingly, the government in West Indies responded to the Danish Schimmelmann letter on October condemning the slave trade and slavery. The letter also noted that most of the slaves sold in the West Indies were weak and sick since traders opted to sell slaves in French colonies where their prices were considerably higher.

Commission for Living Conditions

By the end of the 18th century, Schimmelmann asked for a commission to be set up to study the future of the slave trade. This was largely motivated by his humanitarianism, and interest in improving the living conditions of slaves. The commission for the better organization of the slave trade was set up in 1791 with the objective of "a better arrangement for the trade in blacks."[240]

The commission took into account various factors such as the high mortality rates of slaves during transport, the loss incurred while exporting domestic products to slave forts, and high maintenance charges associated with the forts. In addition, the commission could not help but be influenced by humanitarian reasons and the rise of abolitionist movements throughout Europe. The commission also felt that by providing better living conditions to existing slaves in plantations, the slave populations would maintain themselves, making additional slave trade unnecessary.

The commission conducted research in order to present findings that would be used in initiating new slave rights and possibly an emancipation initiative. One of the

[240] Bastian, "A Question of Custody," 74.

findings by the commission was that of 17,113 slaves shipped from Africa to America from 1778 through 1789, 2,706 died during the Middle Passage. This was fifteen percent of the total number of slaves.[241] Schimmelmann also noted that there were numerous deaths among the sailors who were predominantly Danish citizens.

The commission next analyzed the cargo list of a ship engaged in trade with the Danish Gold Coast in an attempt to describe the origin of goods used to purchase slaves. It was noted that the slave trade was taking in much less revenue compared to the resources allocated to the trade, creating a significant financial loss. For instance, exporting 1,400 slaves annually required four forts and three lodges to be maintained one the Danish Gold Coast with a number of employees who earned high salaries in comparison to the fluctuating slave prices.

The Schimmelmann commission agreed that slaves were the most appropriate labor for work on the plantation[242]. They noted that there were no other people in the world who would work as hard and be as productive the fields as the Africans did. However, the commission also highlighted that the African slaves worked better when they were in better conditions and when they were part of their own family unit. The letter by the commission outlined that when Africans were allowed to have conjugal rights and live in families, they were more productive as compared to when they were separated and in distress. Schimmelmann and his commission remained astute that the high death rate was caused by poor living conditions and it could be improved through

[241] Rawley and Behrendt, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 150.

[242] Bastian, "A Question of Custody," 74.

better care of the young and the sick and by checking the spread of epidemics.[243] Schimmelmann, therefore, began championing the anti-slavery sentiment using the media as his main tool of communication. Schimmelmann backed his arguments based on the commission findings.

The academic review of the commission concludes that the findings and work of the commission were not entirely humanitarian. The mortality rate within the slave population in the Danish West Indies was high. To ensure a constant labor supply for the plantations, a constant stream of expensive shipments of slaves from Africa were needed to resupply the colony. The commission's main objective was to find a more pragmatic and productive source of labor.

Edict of 1792

In response to the findings of the Commission, King Christian VII signed a new decree on "the trade in blacks" in 1792 declaring that the slave trade to the Danish West Indies must end in ten years, i.e., in 1803, the first day of the year.[244] The decree allowed the process to end slowly and pragmatically within a period of ten years. The decree continued that until 1803 "the trade and the importation of slaves would be free to all nations and sugar could be used in exchange for slaves. It was, however, now entirely

[243] Vibæk, *Danish West Indies*, 34.

[244] Daniel Hopkins, Morgan Philip, and Justin Roberts, "The Application of GIS to the Reconstruction of the Slave-Plantation Economy of St. Croix, Danish West Indies" *Historical Geography* 39 (2011): 91-92.

forbidden to export slaves from the islands."[245] It is interesting to note that the peak of the Danish slave trade soon followed, with 25000 slaves being imported in the period of 10 years.[246]

The King managed to adopt some of the committee's suggestions and proposals immediately. One of the suggestions was that the percentage of female slaves should be increased to allow slaves to enjoy conjugal rights and have families. At the beginning of 1795, the head tax on female slaves used in field labor would be abolished, and the tax on male slaves would be increased enough to avoid any loss of revenue.[247] The head tax was increased on house slaves in any home whose numbers exceed a certain necessary minimum. The commission's argument was that house slaves were often unproductive status symbols and, because they were more likely to be single, failed to have as many offspring as did field slaves.[248] King Christian VII also ordered financial support to plantation owners in the Danish West Indies to allow them to purchase more slaves in order to balance the population in respect to gender and age. These changes were followed by requirements for improved living conditions for the slaves through the transition period before slave trade became officially outlawed in Danish colonies.

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[245] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 587.

[246] Lavik, "Small Players," 6.

[247] Erik Gøbel, *The Danish Slave Trade and Its Abolition (Studies in Global Slavery).* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2016), 285.

[248] Gøbel, "Danish Shipping," 130.

The Abolition of the Danish Slave Trade in 1803

Actual abolition of the Danish participation occurred on January 1, 1803. From this time forward, no Danish citizen or ship could embark slaves from Africa or disembark slaves into the Danish West Indies. After 1803, only a few illegal transatlantic trade activities took place under the Danish flag. Once the Danish banned slavery in 1803, the size of the slave population decreased over time until 1848 when the emancipation occurred in the Danish West Indies.[249] Between 1803 and 1848, the authorities were still tacitly accepting voyages but in limited numbers. Following 1803, the slave trade declined to approximately twenty-five voyages. Only 5,000 slaves were transported after 1803.

It should be noted, that the abolition of Danish participation in the slave trade only applied to Danish citizens. Foreign ships carrying African slaves could still utilize the Danish West Indies for trans-shipment of slaves. For example, in September of 1803, a French vessel arrived at St. Thomas with 300 slaves on board. The commandant of the port authorized the disembarkation of these slaves for sale in the slave market. The requirement was that customs duty was to be paid and that the slaves must be sold to foreigners and re-exported aboard foreign-flagged ships to a foreign port. “He based this decision on the privileges of St. Thomas as a free port and considered that it did not

[249] Gøbel, “Danish Shipping,” 9-12.

contravene the edict of 16 March 1792."[250] For many years, the slave markets continued with the Danish West Indies being an entrepot for foreign citizens and nations.[251]

With Denmark's participation in the slave trade ended, the use of the Danish Gold Coast came into question. In 1814, Denmark sold to Great Britain the Danish Gold Coast, including its five forts and settlements in Africa.

Freedman Petition of 1816

The abolition of direct Danish participation in the slave trade took effect in 1803. However, this did not end slave ownership in the Danish West Indies.[252] Nor, did it solve the problem of the lack of civil rights for the freedmen; free blacks within the colony. By 1815, there were 5,035 freedmen in the Danish West Indies compared with 4,119 whites. However, these freedmen did not have the rights of a Danish citizen. In 1816, the freedmen circulated and submitted the Freedman Petition "aspiring for the same civic rights and privileges as the white population." The petition failed, however, freedmen were granted civic rights and privileges in 1830.[253]

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[250] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 160.

[251] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 160.

[252] Lavik, "Small Players," 5.

[253] Han Jordan and Victor Wilson, "The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports in the Northeastern Caribbean: Continuity and Change," in *Dutch Atlantic Connections, 1680-1800: Linking Empires, Bridging Borders*, ed. Gert Oostindie and Jessica V. Roitman (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 305.

Royal Ordinance of 1834

As the freedmen population in the Danish West Indies grew, so did their desire to obtain more rights and privileges. Freedmen were not enslaved. However, they did have the same rights as white Danish citizens. They were subject to regulations including curfews, residential segregation, various work restrictions and they were denied the right to hold public office. Governor Peter von Schölten "was sympathetic to their grievances and also aware that similar restrictions had recently been removed in the nearby British West Indies." He made several proposals to Frederik VI. On April 18, 1834, a royal ordinance was issued "that guaranteed full civil rights to all free colored in the Danish West Indies and nullified any existing regulations that drew a distinction between the white and colored populations."[254]

Emancipation of the Danish Slaves in 1848

The anticipated slave freedom did not materialize even after the trade of slaves was abolished. Denmark outlawed the slave trade in 1803, but it did not abolish slavery.[255] Notably it was the West Indies Governor-General Peter von Schölten whom was most vocal about slave emancipation and he had much impact in pushing the anti-slavery agenda since 1827.[256] Governor Schölten is remembered for instituting and implementing various reforms that aided in easing the conditions for enslaved laborers.

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[254] Richards, "Distant Garden," 67.

[255] Rawley and Behrendt, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 125.

[256] Vibæk, *Danish West Indies*, 123.

Some of the resultant effects of Governor Schölten efforts were the weekends off extension from one day to two days in 1843. This meant that slaves had Saturday to work for themselves and save money and perhaps purchase freedom.

In 1844, the Assembly of Estates of the Realm in Denmark was not making progress in their discussions on how to handle the issue of slavery. Under pressure to devise an emancipation plan that would satisfy both the demands of the abolitionist movement in Europe and the vehement objections of the island planters, King Christian VIII issued a proclamation dated July 28, 1847, decreeing that all children born to slaves after that date would be free, but that emancipation of slaves already living would be deferred for twelve years, until 1859.[257] While the king and his advisers believed the edict represented a fair and workable compromise, von Schölten knew better. He had always been "opposed to a law of free birth, anticipating that 'it would create discontent and have the most regrettable consequences while adult slaves remained in servitude. His calculations could not have been more correct.'42

The revolt led by John Gotlieb, planned in tight secrecy and executed with clockwork precision, began on the evening of July 2, 1848, with the simultaneous lighting of signal fires on the estates of western St. Croix, followed by the tolling of estate bells and the blasting of conch-shell horns. Fires and noisy demonstrations continued throughout the night, and by the following morning, as many as 8,000 slaves had gathered in front of Fort Frederik demanding their freedom. After receiving word of

[257] Claus Fullberg-Stolberg, "Economic Adjustments and the Fight for Cultural Hegemony in the British and Danish West Indies after Slavery," *The Second Slavery: Mass Slavery, World-Economy, and Comparative Microhistories, Part I* (2008), 160.

the insurrection in the early hours of Monday morning, Governor-General von Schölten summoned his senior military and civilian advisers to the government quarters in Christiansted for an emergency meeting.[258]

Governor-General Peter von Schölten succumbed to the pressure and declared emancipation the next day for the slaves even though he had no authority to pass such a decision.[259] Peter von Schölten did not consult with the government, arguably, due to the extensive bureaucracy and time that it would take to communicate with the Danish government amid the protest. Instead, he decided to quell the rebels by entering into an agreement with the slaves pronouncing their emancipation.

The plantation owners and other slave owners within the Danish West Indies were not happy with von Schölten's immediate emancipation of the slaves. "They denied the validity of his proclamation and demanded that he resign as governor-general."[260] Under duress, von Schölten submitted his resignation and returned to Denmark on July 13, 1848. The declaration of emancipation was "confirmed by the Crown on September 22, 1848."[261] However, von Schölten was still court-martialed and found guilty of dereliction

[258] Richards, "Distant Garden," 70.

[259] Hall, *Slave Society*, 82-95.

[260] Richards, "Distant Garden," 71.

[261] Richards, "Distant Garden," 71.

of duty. That decision was eventually overturned. But, von Schölten "died in 1854 without ever having recovered from the burden of disgrace."[262]

Denmark was the first major country to abolish the slave trade at least on paper even if the implementation was delayed by 10 years. What is fundamental is that Denmark was among the first countries to champion the discussion involving slave trade and slavery abolition within the Americas. As outlined earlier, the discussion dates back to the year 1783 when prominent people in the government such as Count Ernst Schimmelmann and Count Christian Ditlev Reventlow started campaigning for anti-slavery.[263] The aftermath of these campaigns were better living conditions for the slaves and a decree banning slave trade during a transitional process. However, slave ownership continued in the Danish West Indies after 1803, as did illegal slave trade with the number of slaves surging within the colony. Eventually, in 1848, Denmark emancipated the slaves in the colonies.

Denmark's Legacy

Before we address Denmark's current historical legacy related to the transatlantic slave trade, let us discuss the definition of historical legacy. Hercules Milas in the publication "*Ethnic Nation and Identity Building"* writes that there are two definitions of historical legacy. The first definition is "what is *actually* handed down from the past." The second definition is "what people *believe* (or imagine) that is handed down from the

[262] Richards, "Distant Garden," 71.

[263] Vibæk, *Danish West Indies*, 123.

past."[264] In this second definition, a historical legacy is molded, possibly even created. The defined legacy is codified into the national consciousness through a wide spectrum of intellectuals, experts, historians and even entertainers. It is promulgated in a variety of communication media. A country's educational processes and materials would also be central to creating a specific historical legacy.[265] At the end of the day, the historical legacy may be factually correct or incorrect. However, it is what the consensus of the nation-state *feels* to be correct. In this section, we will use this second definition in determining Denmark's legacy related to the transatlantic slave trade.

At the foundation of the Danish legacy related to the transatlantic slave trade are three data points. First, with the edict of 1792, Denmark was the first country to end their direct participation in the transatlantic slave trade, even with a 10-year hiatus on implementation until January 1, 1803. Britain would decree an end to their participation in the slave trade five years later in 1807 effective January 1, 1808. "Other European powers followed more hesitantly, beginning with a pledge to cooperate against the slave trade during the Congress of Vienna."[266]

Second, the existing historiography on Denmark's numerical participation in the slave trade puts forth that Danish participation was small; roughly 111,000 slaves

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[264] Raymond Detrez and Barbara Segaert, eds., *Europe and the Historical Legacies in the Balkans* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2008), 17.

[265] Dane Kennedy, review of *The Invention of Tradition* edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 13, no. 1 (1984): 98.

[266] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 576.

embarked from Africa, or less than 1% of the total number of slaves embarked ranking Denmark seven out of seven colonial powers. Lastly, the Danish practiced a much more humane treatment of slaves in their realm. According to Thomsen, slavery in the Danish West Indies can be characterized as "good patriarchal relationship between planters and slaves, and it [the Danish West Indies] was without doubt also the place in the West Indies where the slaves had the best conditions."[267]

These three data points provide the foundation for Denmark's legacy in the transatlantic slave trade summarized by Eltis, "the Danes…had minor roles" in the transatlantic slave trade.[268] Denmark treated their slaves better and gave them more rights than was typical of other nations. And, of great importance, the Danish were first to abolish its participation in the slave trade setting a moral standard for other European countries to follow.

Academic Works Affecting the Danish Legacy

The Transatlantic slave route is perhaps the most researched slave route and has been a subject of more academic studies than other slave trading routes. However, the role of Danish colonialism and its involvement in the slave trade is arguably the least explored. It can be argued that the language barrier that is created by the historical documents that are primarily in Danish and a research community that primarily operates

[267] Rudi Thomsen, "Da vore Negerslaver blev fri," *Socialdemokraten*, 3 July 1948: 76.

[268] Eltis, "The Volume and Structure," 41.

in English is one reason for this lack of research and understanding[269]. It was not until fairly late in the 20th century that academics have placed more emphasis on the Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade.

By this time, the legacy of the Danish participation had already been solidified by the nominal amount of work and its narrative that had been produced. In the United States, the earliest work of most importance was Westergaard's *The Danish West Indies under Company Rule (1671–1754): With a Supplementary Chapter, 1755–1917*. Published in 1917, this book served as the predominant educational resource on the topic until at a minimum the 1970's. There are two critical takeaways from this work that molds the Danish legacy. First, the Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade was minor; "The role played by Denmark-Norway in tropical colonization was indeed not large."[270] Westergaard concluded that 1687 to 1754 the Danish disembarked 16,889 slaves into the Danish West Indies.[271] While written in 1917, Westergaard's work was so influential that his analysis of the number of slaves embarked by Denmark was subsequently used by Curtain in 1969, who simply extended Westergaard's math to 1803 and estimated Denmark's slave importation number at 28,000. In Chapter VIII, "The Planter and the Slave," Westergaard puts forth a narrative where the slave's life was not idyllic but manageable. Slaves had the opportunity to earn and keep the money themselves; they were "allotted a plot of ground, and not infrequently the negroes were

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[269] Jensen and Simonsen, "Introduction: The Historiography of Slavery," 475-494.

[270] Westergaard, *Danish West Indies under Company Rule*, vi.

[271] Westergaard, *Danish West Indies under Company Rule*, 320-326.

permitted to sell the surplus for themselves."[272] Work was hard. However, Westergaard narrated that it was comparable to the work expected of any white worker; "the negroes' working day was long and hard, though no harder than the lot of many a white farm hand of today in the Mississippi valley during the harvest and threshing season."[273]

In Denmark, the most widely read works on the Danish slave trade was *Our Old Tropic Colonies* edited by Johannes Brøndsted published in 1952 and *The Old Danish Tropical Colonies* written by Sophie Peters in 1946. Both books were written clearly from a Danish nationalistic perspective and were the primary academic and educational resources used both in the mid-20th century, and are still used today. Both of these works "were marked by a largely uncritical progressive narrative infused with a good deal of postcolonial nostalgia."[274] In particular, the works put forth that slaves treatment was mild at worst and very humane at best concentrating on the 1792 ban on the slave trade and von Schölten's reforms providing slaves with various privileges and rights.[275]

In 1966, *Jens Vibaek published Danish West Indies 1755-1848: The Greatness of the West Indies.* Published in Denmark this work was the primary educational resource used in Denmark for the latter part of the century. The work continues the progressive, nationalistic viewpoint. Specifically, Vibaek concentrates on the economic aspects of the Danish transatlantic triangular trade and its benefits to Denmark. The book provides

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[272] Westergaard, *Danish West Indies under Company Rule*, 158.

[273] Westergaard, *Danish West Indies under Company Rule*, 158.

[274] Andersen, "We Have Reconquered the Islands," 61.

[275] Andersen, "We Have Reconquered the Islands," 63.

excellent data on the economic workings and inter-relationships of Danish colonialism. From the title, *The Greatness of the West Indies*, through the content of the book is a narrative that is nostalgic of the time from a trade perspective and portrays Denmark as a prime example of the benefits of mercantilist theory.

The Narrative

As stated earlier, that narrative or messaging that comprises the Danish legacy in the transatlantic slave trade can be summarized as volume, humanity, and morality. Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade has been dealt with extensively in the section *Danish Slave Trade by the Numbers*. Quantitative participation of Denmark by scholars has been put forth as low 28,000 (Westergaard and Curtain) to no higher than 111,040, which is the current estimate from the TSTD. In all academic works, Denmark is portrayed as the country least involved in the transatlantic slave trade ranking seven out of seven numerically as to the number of slaves embarked from Africa.

Relative to both the treatment of the slaves by the Danish and the eventual abolition of Danish participation in the slave trade in 1803 and the eventual emancipation of slaves in 1848, the common narrative is that of humanitarianism coupled with a sense of morality. Denmark was attempting to do the right thing in an era where slavery was, unfortunately, an accepted norm. "In the early twentieth century, C. A. Trier argued that abolition predominantly happened as a result of the humanitarian views of Ernst Schimmelmann, then Minister of Finance in Denmark."[276] Schimmelmann is portrayed as

[276] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 577.

a pragmatic man, but one with a deep sense of conviction. He was well aware of the abolition movements in Great Britain and elsewhere. The Commission for Living Conditions that he established and controlled was the mechanism for Schimmelmann to bring about the eventual abolition of both the Danish participation in the slave trade and the emancipation of the Danish slaves. The report of the group "shows clearly that the Commission was influenced by the contemporary abolitionist movement in Britain and France."[277]

Denmark being the first colonial power to renounce participation in the slave trade is a powerful narrative of the Danish legacy. The current historical narratives often recount the positive press the edict of 1792 created and its effect on other countries abolitionist movements. In 1792, the influential journal *Minerva* published a poem dedicated to the Danish Crown Prince; "Let the shameful English follow you ... our King has gained a million brothers."[278] Several famous included the Danish abolition of their participation in the slave trade in poems and plays including P. A. Heiberg and Thomas Thaarup.[279] In April of 1792, the Minerva once again places Denmark in esteem referencing William Wilberforce remarks in the British House of Commons "the Britons mush blush at having missed the opportunity of becoming such a model of honour in this matter."[280] Danish treatment of its slave population, as well as the rights conferred to the

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[277] Richards, "Distant Garden," 66.

[278] *Minerva* (Copenhagen) 28 (1792), 139.

[279] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 587.

[280] Gøbel, "Danish Shipping," 154.

Danish slaves, are frequently referenced in academic works. Schimmelmann's brother penned a letter to Ernst discussing reforms noting a "happy quality of life which without a doubt should be envied by free men."[281] This humanitarian messaging as to Denmark's treatment of the enslaved and their role in its eventual abolition is well ingrained in the existing historiography.

Thus the consensus narrative of the existing historiography puts forth a Danish legacy of their participation in the transatlantic slave trade that is very progressive in nature. Basically leaving the impression that while Denmark was a rather insignificant player in the Atlantic slave trade, the country, its monarchy and its leaders led the way in first the more humane treatment of enslaved, the abolition of the slave trade and the emancipation of the slaves.

Of note, today there are still obvious signs of this Danish legacy. Astrid Nanbo Andersen in his journal publication "'We Have Reconquered the Islands': Figurations in Public Memories of Slavery and Colonialism in Denmark 1948-2012" published in 2013 recounts the story that gave rise to the title of the publication. "In the spring of 2012, a peculiar sign decorated a window in a side street adjacent to the popular boardwalk in Christiansted on the island of St. Croix in the US Virgin Islands. The sign read: "Vi har generobret oerne,"[282] or "We have reconquered the islands." This sign obviously shows little remorse as to the Danish slave history on the island. Upon researching this thesis, the author has come across numerous references that are at best politically incorrect at

[281] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 583.

[282] Andersen, "We Have Reconquered the Islands," 57.

worst flagrant in their underlying lack of at minimum introspection. The Danish National Archives in Copenhagen began a digitization project "The Danish West Indies – Sources of History." It is a collection of resources about the history of the Danish West Indies and includes various tools to assist educators. One tool provides a timeline of the slave trade within the colony. This timeline references the Danish slave ship *Christiansborg* and states: "The 82-foot ship had a crew of 36 men and took 267 slaves aboard in Africa. Only 22 of them died on the journey across the Atlantic Ocean."[283] The "Only 22 of them died" is not a translation of archives, but the chosen narrative of the tools authors.

In conclusion, slavery was abhorrent. More than 12 million Africans have been transported as enslaved laborers across the Atlantic over the course of time. One hundred eleven thousand were shipped under a Danish flag from the west coast of Africa to the Danish West Indies. On the long crossings, conditions were abominable, and many died of disease, suicide, or thirst.[284] Once arriving in the Danish West Indies, the conditions for slaves were not consistent with what in modern times would be minimal human decency. Under this umbrella, the Danish legacy of its participation in the transatlantic slave trade holds onto a progressive narrative. The Danish were minor players in the transatlantic slave trade in terms of numbers. However, the Danish were the most

[283] "Timeline on the Danish Slave Trade," Danish National Archives, accessed Feb. 23, 2018, http://www.tiki-toki.com/timeline/entry/493514/THE-DANISH-NATIONAL-ARCHIVES-Timeline-on-the-Danish-slave-trade/#vars!panel=5083149!.

[284] "The Danish West Indies – Sources of History," Danish National Archives, accessed June 4, 2017, https://www.virgin-islands-history.org/en/history/trade-and-shipping/the-voyage-to-a-life-as-a-slave/.

significant country in improving the living conditions of African slaves and was the leading country in abolishing the slave trade and later slavery itself.

IV

A Revised Historiography of Denmark's Role in the Transatlantic Slave Trade

Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade is complex. It does not follow the established mercantilist point of view of the triangular trade route. The traditional view is that all trade stays within the country's triangular route; raw material harvested from a colony is transported to the European homeland and used to purchase manufactured goods. In turn, these manufactured goods are transported to Africa to be used to purchase slave labor. This slave labor is then transported to the colonies for the production of raw material thus completing the triangle. All profits remain in the triangle, and any excess production is sold externally establishing a positive balance of trade.

The Danish transatlantic trade cannot be mapped to this model. In fact, the Danish participation in the overall colonial trade in the Americas and the transatlantic slave trade specifically is a complex interrelationship between many foreign countries, individuals, and companies. In this section, we will drill down into the complexity of the Danish trade model and uncover the specific variations of the Danish trade model to the traditional mercantile triangular trade route.

The Danish transatlantic trade was powered by regional, commercial, and personal networks that operated outside of the traditional mercantilist policies that were the foundation of the typical triangular trade route. At the core of the Danish trade were two realities. First, the Danish West Indies while owned and governed by Denmark had very few natural born Danish citizens. It was comprised of a heterogeneous population from many countries. Second, the Danish West Indies growth was a result of it being a free port; "free port colonies were open places where the mobility of people, goods,

capital, and ideas were defining features of society."[285] This free port heritage resulted in many complex economic and trade connections both within the region and internationally. Neville Hall in his book *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies: St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix* astutely refers to this as "mercantilism manqué."[286] "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."[287]

The Caribbean was thousands of miles away from their European colonizer's homeland. This geographical reality placed limitations on the effectiveness of Crown charter companies operating in the traditional mercantilist model. Steensgaard in "*The Companies as a Specific Institution in the History of European Expansion"* puts forth that the charter companies of the Atlantic trade were monopolies in name only. "Creative and flexible solutions were required to trade in the Atlantic, and "most companies would sub-delegate tasks to persons or unincorporated partnerships" regardless of nationality.[288] A good example of this is the Danish slave trade with Cuba. The number of Danish flagged ships exporting slaves from the Danish West Indies and importing them into

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[285] Jordan and Wilson, "The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports," 308.

[286] Hall, *Slave Society*, 23.

[287] Jordan and Wilson, "The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports," 308.

[288] Lavik, "Small Players," 10.

Cuba after 1790 was much greater than the total number of Danish flagged ships embarking slaves from all of Africa. The supply of these slaves into the Danish West Indies was coming from a network of suppliers, foreign and domestic. Thus, "it would be a gross oversimplification merely to equate the slave trade with the triangular trade."[289]

Danish in Name Only

Very few natural-born Danes occupied the Danish West Indies. Due to its size, scarce population and geographical placement, Denmark needed the help of foreigners to populate and colonize the Danish West Indies. Hall referred to this policy as "colonization by invitation."[290] Settlers from England, Holland, France and other countries took advantage of the liberal immigration, land and trade policies of Denmark to establish plantations in the Danish West Indies. In fact, the earliest heritage of the Danish West Indies shows the inter-relationships of the colonies with foreign countries, companies, and individuals. One of the first company's the Danish monarchy contracted with to assist in colonizing St. Thomas, the Brandenburg African Company, was not Danish. The Danish placed this Prussian company under treaty in 1685 to import slaves into St. Thomas and to establish plantations on the island. During this time, St. Thomas was overseen by The Royal Chartered Danish West India and Guinea Company whom "recruited many of its staff from Hamburg and Holstein."[291] This early reliance on

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[289] Green-Pedersen, "Colonial Trade," 110.

[290] Hall, *Slave Society*, 6.

[291] Weindl, "The Slave Trade of Northern Germany," Chap 5.

foreign companies and individuals to establish Denmark's participation in the transatlantic trade was the first step to allowing this practice to become well entrenched.

One of the more liberal Danish policies in the Danish West Indies was the grant of citizenship. Denmark made it relatively easy to establish Danish citizenship once an individual established commerce within the colony. Danish citizenship was very desirable. It allowed an individual to take advantage of various civil rights, granted favorable tax benefits and opened up trade and commerce opportunities. The ability to gain citizenship was one factor in the ability of the colony to attract non-Danish immigrants.

There were many conflicts between colonial powers both in Europe and in the Americas in the 18th century. These conflicts resulted in "extensive and complex migration flows, as Caribbean colonies were engulfed in internal conflicts and were subject to external aggression."[292] As a neutral county in most of these conflicts, a large number of foreign migrants made their way to the Danish West Indies both to seek refuge and to continue commerce during these conflicts. "Conflict made the free ports convenient marketplaces and attracted merchant capital."[293] Many Dutch and Sephardic Jews had migrated to St. Thomas from St. Eustatius after the British occupied the island

[292] Jordan and Wilson, "The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports," 299.

[293] Jordan and Wilson, "The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports," 308.

in 1781.[294] The French conquest of St. Eustatius, St. Martin and Saba in 1795 was a source of considerable migration to both St. Barthélemy and St. Thomas.[295] These conflicts created waves of Dutch artisans, craftsmen, mariners, workers, and slaves migrating to the Danish West Indies in the 1790s. "Some of the large merchant houses followed, and those establishments and property took root in the islands during the same period."[296] These merchant houses increased the importance of St. Thomas as a regional trade hub. The French Revolution began in 1789 and created an additional wave of migration. French colonials sought neutral islands depending on their political affiliation. "St. Barthélemy received many refugees from Martinique and Guadeloupe, whereas St. Thomas was a destination for refugees from Saint-Domingue."[297] To this day, there is a large French population on St. Thomas.

Upon receiving Danish citizenship, individuals were able to circumvent mercantilist regulations restricting foreign trade and gave merchants the ability to evade

[294] Jordan and Wilson, "The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports," 299.

[295] Jordan and Wilson, "The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports," 299.

[296] Jordan and Wilson, "The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports," 308.

[297] Jordan and Wilson, "The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports," 299.

warring maritime forces by being protected under the neutral Danish flag.[298] This was an important aspect of the growth of the Danish colonial trade "the Danish authorities allowed the Dannebrog to be used as a flag of convenience."[299] An example is provided by Svend E. Green-Pedersen in his journal article "Colonial trade under the Danish Flag." Herbert S. Klein, an American historian, published an article in 1975 claiming a link between the Danish West Indies slave trade and slave importation to Cuba between 1790 and 1843. Klein claimed that "nearly two hundred of the slave-ships which called at Cuba during the period 1790-1807 are described as Danish."[300] Green-Pedersen compared Klein's data with ship name, ship ownership and captain data from the Danish West Indies archives. Of the 192 Danish vessels in Klein's data, eighty-one of the Danish ships were owned by "naturalized St. Thomas merchants of heterogeneous national origins."[301] The Danish flagged merchant fleet was Danish in name, but multi-national in reality.

The abundance of nationalities that comprised the Danish West Indies is further seen in the free black or Freedmen population. For example, Charlotte Amalie had a Freedmen population of 221 individuals in 1802. Of that number, there was "one originating from St. John, ten from St. Croix and 122 from St. Thomas. Out of the

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[298] Jordan and Wilson, "The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports," 308.

[299] Green-Pedersen, "Colonial Trade," 111.

[300] Green-Pedersen, "Colonial Trade," 94.

[301] Green-Pedersen, "Colonial Trade," 103.

remaining 89 – 40 percent of the total – all were of foreign origin."[302] Thirty-nine were from Curacao, thirty from St. Eustatius with the remainder hailing from the French and British colonies of Guadeloupe, Martinique, Barbados, and Jamaica.[303]

The Danish West Indies practice of 'colonization by invitation' was successful in attracting foreigners to the colonies. "The result was that by the time of the Crown's take over (of the Danish West Indies) from the Danish West India-Guinea Company in 1754, out of the 75 largest plantations on St. Croix, 30 belonged to the English, 17 to the Danish, 6 to the Dutch, 4 to the French, and 18 to people of other nationalities."[304]

The degree that the Danish West Indies had become a true polyglot community, comprised of many nationalities, is best stated in the writings of J. P. Nissen. Traveling to the islands in 1792, Nissen 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 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

[302] Jordan and Wilson, "The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports," 304.

[303] Jordan and Wilson, "The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports," 304.

[304] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 579.

> and English manufactured goods, bringing along much-needed silver coin from the Spanish main and Puerto Rico."[305]

St. Thomas had become a true cosmopolitan port whose regional connections and ties to European and Danish shipping were all a crucial aspect of the Danish trade.[306] In 1839 the Danish West Indies were home to forty-one importing merchant houses, thirteen English, eleven French, Six German, four Italian and Spanish, and four American. Of the forty-one, only three were Danish or Danish West Indian.[307] By the 1840's St. Thomas and its port, Charlotte Amalie, was firmly established as a regional trading hub with agriculture playing a secondary role. Of the 14,000 inhabitants on St. Thomas, only 2,500 of them worked on plantations, and 2,250 of those were slaves. The Danish West Indies had transitioned from an entirely agrarian society to one that was much more aligned to trade and commerce.

The Danish West Indies were able to keep and grow this heterogeneous population because of its open system of trade. For most periods of time, foreigners were legally allowed to conduct trade and commerce in the colony, though unlike Danish merchants, they were taxed on both imports and exports.[308] When foreigners migrated to the colony, the liberal immigration policy of the Danish allowed them to gain Danish

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[305] Jordan and Wilson, "The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports," 293-294.

[306] Jordan and Wilson, "The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports," 293-294.

[307] Westergaard, *Danish West Indies under Company Rule*, 252.

[308] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 579.

citizenship. This tie to commerce on the island likely influenced others within their same family or ethnicity or business network to migrate to the colony as well.[309] Thus the growth of foreign nationals and foreign trade spurred further foreign migration and trade.

The Danish West Indies, in conclusion, was actually the least *Danish* in the realm. From its earliest days, the colonies welcomed individuals of all nations both as permanent residents that became citizens and as merchants participating in trade. This openness to foreigners allowed the colonies to grow into a regional trade hub that was truly multi-national in population, character, and trade.

Danish Trade is Complex, Not Triangular

Under the mercantile economic theory, the traditional triangular trade system kept raw material, labor, and commercial trade under control and for the benefit of a single nation-state. Only excess production would be sold outside of the nation-state thereby resulting in a positive balance of trade resulting in a net influx of wealth and capital for the nation-state. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Danish attempted to follow this mercantile principle creating a Danish triangular trade route. As discussed in Chapter I, the Danes established Royal charter companies and gave them trade monopolies within the Danish triangular trade route.

Initially, the ships of these charter companies followed this trade route. Relatively quickly, social, political and economic forces in the Danish West Indies pushed aside these monolithic mercantile trade practices and replaced them with a complex set of

[309] Jordan and Wilson, "The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports," 304.

interrelationships and interdependencies that transcended political and geographical boundaries. By the 1730s most Danish ships sailed only between Denmark and the Danish West Indies bypassing Africa and the triangular trade route. "During the flourishing trade period of 1755-1807…only 4 percent sailed the triangular route."[310] Meanwhile, each year hundreds of foreign vessels or vessels flying a "Danish flag of convenience" were sailing between the Danish West Indies and ports across the Caribbean, the Americas, and even Europe.[311] The Danish West Indies trading partners were more diverse than envisioned by mercantile theory.

Trade from Africa

Denmark did possess outposts in Africa referred to as the Danish Gold Coast; reviewed in Chapter III. The existing historiography gives the impression that all slaves embarked from Africa by the Danish came from the Danish Gold Coast. This impression is furthered by some existing analysis that quantifies Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade by only considering slaves embarked from the Danish Gold Coast. For the Danes, the supply of slave labor to be embarked to the Americas was more complex. "Europeans had to show a great deal of patience, flexibility and ability to adapt to local (African) power structures in order to get access to the slave trade. As a small

[310] "The Danish West-Indies – Sources of history." Danish National Archives. https://www.virgin-islands-history.org/en/history/trade-and-shipping/the-voyages-across-the-atlantic/.

[311] Ole Feldbæk, *The Battle of Copenhagen 1801: Nelson and the Danes* (South Yorkshire: Leo Cooper, 2002), 13-14.

player, Denmark-Norway also found itself extremely dependent on cooperation with other European traders."[312] This complexity coupled with the laws of supply and demand necessitated much more flexibility in sourcing slaves from Africa than what would be espoused by traditional mercantile principles.

First, not all slaves embarked by Danish ships came from the Danish Gold Coast forts and outposts. During many time periods, slaves sourced by one Fort or colonial power were ultimately sold and embarked in Africa by another. In the 17th and early 18th century, it was common for slave ships to make multiple stops along the African coast to purchase slaves until the ship reached capacity. The Danish picked up slaves from many places in West Africa, not solely the Danish Gold Coast. An example is the ship *Christianus Quintus* "of the 447 slaves taken off the coast by her, only 72 were purchased at Little Popo, compared to 236 on the Gold Coast and 139 at Ouidah."[313] Only the Gold Coast (presumably the Danish Gold Coast) was controlled by Denmark at the time. From 1737 until 1743, slave trade at Anomabu was handled by a floating factory, the ship Argyle, which was operated by a group based in London. "The Danish fort, Christiansborg, for example, was reselling slaves to ships at Anomabu via the Argyle in

[312] Lavik, "Small Players," 4.

[313] Martin Klein, "S Ilke S Trickrodt. Afro-European Trade in the Atlantic World: The Western Slave Coast 1550–1885," The *American Historical Review* 120, no. 5 (2015): 2004-005.

this period."[314] In this example, we can see the complexities involved as the Danes were reselling slaves to the English in Africa who sold them to a Danish ship for embarkation.

The Baltic Guinea Company received a charter from the Danish monarchy in 1781 giving them a thirty-year exclusive monopoly of the Danish slave trade and the use of the possessions on the Danish Gold Coast.[315] Yet, From 1781 to 1787, slightly less than half of the slaves embarked on Danish ships were obtained from sources outside of the Danish Gold Coast; "just under 13,100 slaves were exported by Danish ships; of these almost 6,800 came from Danish possessions and almost 6,300 from elsewhere."[316]

The commission established by Schimmelmann in 1791 prepared a quantitative analysis of the Danish slave trade. In their reports, the commission indicated that 17,113 slaves had been embarked to the Danish West Indies between 1778 and 1789. Of that number, 12,062 were purchased from the Danish forts, and 5,051 or 29.5% of the slaves were purchased from non-Danish outposts in Africa.[317] The Danish Gold Coast had challenges handling volume during the peak slave trading years. For example, during the American War of Independence, demand for the transatlantic shipment of slaves by Danish flagged ships was high due to the countries neutrality. The Danish Gold Coast was unable to meet the demand. "Danish ships therefore had to buy half of their human

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[314] Elise Lemire, "Venture Smith and the Business of Slavery and Freedom," *New England Quarterly* 84, no. 2 (2011): 365-368.

[315] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 174.

[316] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 175.

[317] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 586.

cargoes from foreign European settlements on the Upper Coast." [318] While the Danish Gold Coast provided most of the slaves for Danish flagged ships in the 17th and most of the 18th century, after 1775 West Central Africa and the Bight of Biafra supplied most of their slaves." It was also around this time that foreign vessels had a much great share of slave shipments to the Danish West Indies.[319]

Second, not all slaves embarked at the Danish Gold Coast forts and outposts were transported on Danish ships. As shown in the first point, Danish ships often purchased slaves in Africa either directly from African communities along the coast or from the forts and outposts of other colonial powers. The same applies to non-Danish ships. When the Danish Gold Coast had an adequate supply, foreign ships would purchase slaves from the Danish forts and outposts. "The merchant company David & Dubucq located in Paris sent at least seven ships to buy slaves at the Danish forts in the period of 1770–1773."[320] Hernaes estimated that 13,000 slaves were sold to European slave traders by individual Danish fort officers in the Danish Gold Coast.[321]

Starting in 1781, the Baltic Guinea Trade Company managed the slave trade from the Danish Gold Coast. From 1781 to 1787, the Company sold slightly less than 8,100 slaves. In almost every year, the Company sold more slaves from the Danish Gold Coast than were embarked on Danish ships. Logic dictates that the Company was selling slaves

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[318] Gøbel, "Danish Shipping," 110.

[319] Eltis, "The Volume and Structure," 39.

[320] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 580.

[321] Lavik, "Small Players," 5.

to foreign ships; "it seems therefore likely that Danish neutrality was being exploited to supply foreign ships with slaves in Africa."[322]

Third, not all slaves embarked by Danish-controlled ships were transported to the Danish West Indies. According to documents from Schimmelmann's commission, from 1778 to 1779 of the 17,113 slaves shipped from Africa on behalf of the Danish, only 43% were disembarked in the Danish West Indies. The remaining 57% were sold to other colonies; "predominantly to the French sugar islands where the slave traders could obtain a better price."[323] In 1781 the Baltic Guinea Trade Company was given control by the Crown, the Danish Gold Coast of Africa and a fleet of ships. During the American War of Independence, the company sent thirty-three ships to the African Danish Gold Coast to embark slaves. Immediately following the war, they made an additional eighteen voyages. "The vast majority of these ships sold slaves to the French and the Spanish colonies rather than to the Danish islands."[324]

Lastly, the Danish West Indies would purchase slaves from foreign nations that were not embarked in the Danish West Indies. The free port status allowed for the Danes to purchase slaves from foreign countries that had no association at all with Denmark; "around 42000 slaves were bought from Great Britain, the US, France, and the Netherlands between 1680 and 1825.[325]

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[322] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 175.

[323] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 586.

[324] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 580.

[325] Lavik, "Small Players," 6.

The data clearly indicates that slave embarkation in Africa was done through a complex network of suppliers rather than a nation using exclusively assets controlled by their country.

Free Port Creates Foreign Trade and Slave Markets

The Danish West Indies has a legacy of being a free port; defined as providing the ability for all Danish citizens to participate in trade and the ability for foreign nationals and ships to participate in trade. At times this free port status was codified in law such as the edicts of 1764 and 1785. During some periods, monopolistic trade restrictions were put into place, but often these were either selectively followed or ignored. Either way, the entrepôt role of the colonies and in particular St. Thomas was clearly cast.

The free port legacy began in the early days of Danish colonization of the island of St. Thomas. The Brandenburg African Company, under Danish treaty, had the rights to import slaves into St. Thomas from 1685 to 1715. From 1686 to 1703, the BAC imported 13,000 slaves to St. Thomas; "while the slave population did not reach 4,000 until 1720."[326] The difference was not due to mortality. It was due to the BAC trans-shipping slaves to other foreign colonies in the region. "In 1687, Vice-Governor Heins reported that the Brandenburg's had sold 230 slaves to the neighboring islands but only twenty in St. Thomas."[327] The Spanish were in particular concerned that the BAC, utilizing St. Thomas, would attempt to penetrate the slave trade of the Spanish colonies, namely

[326] Weindl, "The Slave Trade of Northern Germany," Chap 5.

[327] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 158.

Puerto Rico, and they made conscious efforts to prevent this. This was only partially successful as "A Dutch merchant working in the service of the Germans (BAC) traveled on one of the first company ships to St. Thomas and later traded along the shore of the Spanish West Indies."[328] In all, the BAC while operating out of St. Thomas actively traded with the English Leeward Islands, the Spanish West Indies, English Jamaica and the colonies of the French Caribbean.[329]

In the 1670's Dutch merchants were supplying slaves from Curacao to St. Croix using St. Thomas as the entrepôt.[330] Between 1691 and 1692, the French plundered the English islands of Antigua, Nevis, and Montserrat. "The English sought to restock their colonies with slaves by acquiring eight shiploads at St. Thomas."[331] Even Hamburg Germany used St. Thomas as entrepôt sending the slave ship *King of Prussia* to St. Thomas in 1715 with 212 slaves aboard to sell.[332] The war in Europe in the late 1600's further exacerbated a slave labor shortage in the Americas. In the French Caribbean, Saint-Domingue was officially given the right to purchase slaves from any country. "Two years later, Ducasse, the governor of Saint-Domingue, rejoiced in the fact that "for two

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[328] Weindl, "The Slave Trade of Northern Germany," Chap 5.

[329] David Eltis, and David Richardson, *Extending the Frontiers: Essays on the New Transatlantic Slave Trade Database* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 5.

[330] Eltis and Richardson, *Extending the Frontiers*, 5.

[331] Weindl, "The Slave Trade of Northern Germany," Chap 5.

[332] Weindl, "The Slave Trade of Northern Germany," Chap 5.

years this colony has shown a brilliant luster … 8 or 900 Blacks have come from St. Thomas; one no longer has to fear a shortage."[333]

According to Westergaard: "A very considerable share of the negroes sold at St. Thomas were brought in by interlopers."[334] Records indicate that these interlopers received at least tacit support from Danish officials. The BAC once complained of a Danish official who controlled half of St. Thomas stating he "had made a contract with the BAC (but)…. had broken the contract by selling slaves to 'strangers' and negotiating for slaves with interlopers to the trade."[335] Middlemen would purchase these slaves on St. Thomas and ship them to colonies throughout the region. "There are references to trade connections as far north as Carolina."[336]

From the time of Danish claim to St. Thomas to the mid-18th century, the Danish West Indies in practice was an entrepôt for trade between many nations in the region regardless of the formal edict. However, this was soon to happen. The Crown took direct control of the administration of the Danish West Indies in 1754. The Crown wanted to encourage more trade and, therefore more revenue to the monarchy. By the edicts of 1754 and 1755, Denmark opened the harbor of Charlotte Amalie to ships of all nations, government or private. Denmark was a recognized neutral country by the other colonial

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[333] Weindl, "The Slave Trade of Northern Germany," Chap 5.

[334] Westergaard, *Danish West Indies under Company Rule*, 148.

[335] Angela Sutton, "The Seventeenth-century Slave Trade in the Documents of the English, Dutch, Swedish, Danish and Prussian Royal Slave Trading Companies," *Slavery & Abolition* 36, no. 3 (2015): 454.

[336] Eltis and Richardson, *Extending the Frontiers*, 5.

powers. As a result, the colony quickly became a regional commercial hub welcoming international maritime traffic including slave merchants from other countries. The records indicate numerous voyages from both the Danish Gold Coast and other non-Danish slave forts in Africa into Charlotte Amalie under Danish, English, French, Dutch and other flags as well as private merchants. A review of these records indicates that many of these African slaves were disembarked in the Danish West Indies to be sold to local plantation owners or sold in the various slave auctions active on all three islands. Most of the slaves sold in these auctions would be trans-shipped to other colonies throughout the region. There are also records of some slave ships utilizing Charlotte Amalie as their initial point of entry into the Americas but ultimately being routed to other destinations after receiving supplies. "In May 1758, it was reported that 16 ships at Christiansted in St. Croix belonged to foreigners whereas only 6 belonged to Danish merchants."[337]

Under these free trade policies, the Bargum Trading Association imported more than 3,000 slaves to the Danish West Indies from 1767 to 1776 and subsequently sold 1,873 slaves to French slave ships. More than 6,000 slaves were disembarked at St. Croix from 1767 to 1777, a large number being disembarked from a foreign vessel.[338] Danish flagged ships carried the vast majority of slaves before 1775. Afterward, foreign vessels dominated the slave trade in the Danish West Indies.[339] Private contractors were also participating in the slave trade in the Danish islands. "In both 1788 and 1789 private

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[337] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 579.

[338] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 17.

[339] Eltis, "The Volume and Structure," 39.

contractors delivered just under 550 slaves to foreign islands and a few more to Danish islands.[340] At the time these ships registry was difficult to determine.

As discussed earlier, Klein found data showing a slave trade link between the Danish West Indies and Cuba between 1790 and 1807. 12,644 slaves from the Danish West Indies were disembarked in Cuba during this time.[341] In 1823 the Schimmelmann commission determined that "that half of the slaves imported to St. Croix during the last years of the legal Danish slave trade could not be disposed of on the island and had to be sold to Cuba instead."[342] During the latter part of the 18th century, several somewhat obscure powers utilized the Danish West Indies free port status. "Hanse town merchants organized a mini revival of the North German slave trade, dispatching at least eight slave voyages between 1798 and 1805." These slave voyages embarked slaves primarily from the Danish Gold Coast and sold them in Havana, Montevideo, Suriname, and St. Thomas.[343] At the turn of the century the Swedish, whom still possessed St. Barthélemy, became increasingly envious of the amount of trade occurring in the Danish West Indies. In 1802, a report was prepared to provide "a systematic overview of conditions and regulations in the Danish colony, and it is attached with a list of the island's "most

[340] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 175.

[341] Green-Pedersen, "Colonial Trade," 95.

[342] Green-Pedersen, "Colonial Trade," 103.

[343] Weindl, "The Slave Trade of Northern Germany," Chap 5.

distinguished" merchants."[344] The list included Richard Down Jennings who was Bermudian and a former resident of St. Barthélemy. The report goes on to state that finding his name on this last was not a surprise "as the dominantly Anglophone Danish island of St. Thomas had for some time become a node in Bermudian trade networks."[345]

An interesting example of the prevalence of foreign trade powered by the free port status of the Danish West Indies is that of Ernst Schimmelmann. He was Director of the Baltic-Guinea Trade Company, which was given exclusive rights to the Danish Gold Coast as well as the use of the Danish fleet to assist in the slave trade. While the charter of the company was to import slaves into the Danish West Indies "he also managed to tolerate the company's sale of 6229 slaves to the Danish colonies, and 8178 to other sugar islands in the West Indies."[346]

An effect of the free port status of the Danish West Indies was the trans-shipment of slaves. This intra-island or intra-Caribbean slave trade is harder to quantify as not much research by scholars to date has been done on the intra slave trade. And, some of this trade was handled by private merchants in smaller ships and often illegally. Trans-shipment of slaves throughout the region from St. Thomas began with the

[344] Jordan and Wilson, "The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports," 303.

[345] Jordan and Wilson, "The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports," 303.

[346] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 582.

"…Brandenburg involvement in intra-Caribbean trafficking."[347] According to Green-Pedersen, "Just under 3,200 slaves, or more than two thirds of the total imported via Frederiksted in 1767-77, 1784, 1790, 1799- 1800 and 1802, came from the West Indies compared with little more than 1,300 from Africa."[348] He goes on to state that 75 of those slaves came from North America showing that the trading link to St. Thomas was vast. In addition, he shows inter-Caribbean slave trade into the Danish West Indies from the St. Christopher, Anguilla, Tortola, Montserrat, Antigua, Nevis, Spanish Town, Jost Van Dyke, the French islands of Martinique and St. Lucia and the Dutch islands of St. Eustatius and St. Martin.[349] The Danish West Indies and in particular St. Thomas became an important port of trans-shipment for the inter-Caribbean slave trade.[350]

In some ways, the Danish West Indies were always known as a free port even during time frames of restrictive even monopolistic trade policies. Prior to various Crown edicts declaring free port status for the islands, the Danish West Indies welcomed foreign trade both legal and illegal. This fact was eventually codified in law declaring the colony a free port. The result was that St. Thomas became a truly international port handling trade throughout the Americas.

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[347] Weindl, "The Slave Trade of Northern Germany," Chap 5.

[348] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 149-197.

[349] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 149.

[350] Westergaard, *Danish West Indies under Company Rule*, 4.

Illegal Slave Trade

Throughout the slave period, slaves were many times acquired through illicit means. Often this was to get around various restrictions or monopolies given to the European charter companies. Once obtained, it was difficult to sell them through normal trade channels. An industry of independent traders or interlopers was thus created. These slaves could not be sold directly to most colonies. However, individuals could purchase "these slaves from the few islands (e.g., Curacao, St Eustatia, St Thomas, Barbados, Jamaica) whose residents openly bought contraband slaves from Africa and transformed their islands into clearing houses for the enslaved to be transported elsewhere in the Americas."[351] Interlopers were a large aspect of the inter-Caribbean trade.

Beginning January 1, 1803, all Danish citizens were forbidden to participate in the slave trade. While the ban on Danish citizens participating in the transatlantic slave trade was enforced in the Danish port, "it is clear that the Governor-General of the Danish West Indies allowed the continuation of the transit slave trade through the free port on St. Thomas."[352] In the years after 1803, the Klein study identifies a total of 191 Danish slave-voyages to Havana Cuba alone. As validation to the importance of the intra trade, 154 of them were used for intra slave trade and only 9 were embarking slaves from Africa.[353] These Danish ships disembarked 12,501 slaves from the Danish West Indies into Cuba.

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[351] Sutton, "The Seventeenth-century Slave Trade," 454.

[352] Green-Pedersen, "Colonial Trade" 97.

[353] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 96.

The Customs Department of the Danish West Indies has a record from 1804 of a complaint from the commandant of St. Thomas. He stated it was difficult to enforce the slave trading ban "because of the almost unlimited trading liberties enjoyed by St. Thomas port; foreign slave-ships often understated the number of slaves actually aboard when clearing inwards and overstated when clearing outwards, so enabling them to import negroes clandestinely into the island."[354]

Illegal slave trading was still being reported in the Danish Gold Coast in the early 1800's. In 1824, illegal slave exporting was found in the Danish Fort Prinzenstein.[355] While the volume of slave trading decreased rapidly after 1803, slave trading would not truly disappear until the abolition of slavery occurred in 1848.

A New Paradigm for Danish Participation in the Transatlantic Slave Trade

The objective of this section is to establish a new paradigm to be used for the quantification of history. Specifically, it is to present a new paradigm for the quantification of the Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade. Using existing and new data that has only recently become available, the paradigm can be applied to the empirical data yielding a historical quantification. William O. Aydelotte in the journal article "Quantification in History" states: "The principal value of quantification for the

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[354] Green-Pedersen, "Scope and Structure," 164.

[355] "Timeline on the Danish Slave Trade," Danish National Archives, accessed Feb. 23, 2018, http://www.tiki-toki.com/timeline/entry/493514/THE-DANISH-NATIONAL-ARCHIVES-Timeline-on-the-Danish-slave-trade/#vars!panel=5083190!.

study of history, stated in the simplest terms, is that it provides a means of verifying general statements."[356] This simple definition is ideal for the thesis in question.

Current Paradigm

As discussed in Chapter III, *Danish Slave Trade by the Numbers*, the current historiography of Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade relies on quantification produced by a handful of academics; notably Westergaard, Curtain, Green-Pedersen, Lovejoy, Per Hernaes and Eltis whom is often associated with the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database. Each of these scholars quantifies the Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade applying similar basic principles to the data available at the time. The paradigm or variation thereof they use is: identify the number of slaves embarked from Africa, transported to the Americas and permanently disembarked in the Danish West Indies. The result is Danish participation. This model has produced results that indicate the Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade was less than 100,000 enslaved Africans. The source with the most current data, the TSTD, places the number at 111,040.

This past historical quantification of Danish participation has led to the application of generalized terms such as "small," "minor" and "insignificant" when discussing the Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade. These generalizations have now become part of the historiography and legacy of the Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade.

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[356] William Aydelotte, "Quantification in History," *American Historical Review* 71, no. 3 (1966): 803-825.

The paradigm used in the past for quantification relies on the assumption that the Danish transatlantic slave trade followed the traditional mercantile principles of a triangular trade route. The previous paradigm basically inserts a front-end filter that could best be described as unilateral Danish control. The paradigm assumes that there is only one *route* of Danish participation in the slave trade, that *route* is 100% under the control of the Danish, and all aspects of Danish participation in the slave trade are 100% embedded, exclusively, in that *route*. Using a quantification model based on mercantile principles of triangular trade, the model is forced to use a series of assumptions:

- assumes that all enslaved Africans embarked at the Danish Gold Coast would be disembarked in the Danish West Indies,
- assumes that every enslaved African reaching the ports in the Danish West Indies were permanently disembarked at that port, and
- assumes that only enslaved Africans embarked directly from Africa were disembarked in the Danish West Indies.

The paradigm as promulgated commits the fallacy of false assumption. The fallacy is best explained by applying the assumptions. An African is captured by the Ga ethnic group on the Danish Gold Coast and sold to the Danes at Fort Christiansborg. The Danes sell that enslaved African to a Danish flagged slave ship operated by the Baltic-Guinea Trade Company under contract by Denmark. The ship travels to the Caribbean making its first stop in Spanish West Indies. The slave purchased at the Danish Gold Coast is sold to an interloper. The interloper adds this slave to a cargo of slaves recently purchased in St. Croix. The interloper's intent is to sell this shipment in Cuba. Applying the current models being used to quantify Danish participation, it would quantify as "0" – no Danish participation since most of the models use slaves disembarked into the Danish West Indies as the measure of participation. While the Danish participated in the capture

and transport of this enslaved African, that slave does not appear in the Danish participation numbers.

The assumptions that the Danish trade looks like a triangular trade has resulted in the current numbers attributed to Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade to be grossly understated. One of the more important factors in this gross understatement is the lack of consideration of the intra-American and intra-Caribbean slave trade. David Eltis who has been one of the leading scholars in creating the TSTD recognizes this limitation. He has opined that as many as "50 percent of all slaves who arrived in the Americas quickly moved to other parts of the Americas, as part of an intra-American slave trade. Indeed, for nearly 150 years after 1650, slaves arrived in most of Spanish America via entrepots rather than directly from Africa. Unfortunately, such movements are not yet captured in the dataset, which is based on the transatlantic slave trade only."[357]

The last challenge with the existing models that have been applied to quantify the Danish participation in the slave trade is that of time period. Slave trade in the Americas is documented as occurring well into the late 19th century; the last documented voyage in the TSTD occurring in 1866. Models that have been applied to the Danish West Indies tend to stop the analysis in 1803, the year that the edict of 1792 abolishing Danish participation in the slave trade took legal effect. However, it is well documented that the Danish slave trade ecosystem continued to operate well into the mid-1800's through foreign nationals and interlopers. "Klein mentions no less than 39 Danish slave-ships as calling at Havana de Cuba in the years 1803-07, even though the Danish slave trade had

[357] Eltis, "The Volume and Structure," 35.

been abolished in 1803." If Klein's information about such a large number of Danish slave-ships is correct, we are dealing with a hitherto overlooked branch of Danish colonial trade."[358]

Analyzing slave transport data in such a linear fashion ignores the complexity of the slave trade that was the reality for the Danish West Indies. For Denmark, the impact is magnified since the Danish West Indies is one of the major entrepôts that Eltis references earlier. Entrepôts like the Danish West Indies are in fact a critical link in the overall supply chain that makes up the transatlantic slave trade. The importance is well stated by Green-Pedersen, "the Danish slave trade in the West Indies indirectly contributed to the establishment of Spanish America. It was, to put it strongly, "a pawn in a Spanish game."[359]

Thus, a new paradigm for historical quantification is needed.

New Paradigm

The nuances and complexities of the Danish transatlantic trade lead to a conclusion that it is too complex for a linear, mercantile framework analysis. First, the definition of "Danish participation" would be vastly different under the Danish system compared to a true monolithic mercantile system. The Danish transatlantic trade including the slave trade does not follow the mercantile principles of the triangular trade route. The data and literature review clearly shows that Danish trade consisted of a

[358] Green-Pedersen, "Colonial Trade," 94.

[359] Green-Pedersen, "Colonial Trade," 110.

complex *ecosystem* of inter-relationships and inter-dependencies between Denmark, foreign countries and colonies, and foreign and domestic companies and individuals. Hall referred to this as "colonization by invitation." The Danish embrace of foreigners is at the core of what might be defined as the Danish transatlantic trade *ecosystem*. Any aspect of this *ecosystem* that was used in the slave trade would thus qualify as Danish participation. Any slave touching the ecosystem in their long, arduous journey from Africa to the Americas would qualify as Danish participation.

Second, the foundation of the Danish transatlantic slave trade *ecosystem* is the free port status of the Danish West Indies; both in practice and in legal standing. The free port nature of the Danish West Indies was so embedded in the socioeconomic and geopolitical beliefs and practices of the islands, any paradigm that attempts historical quantification of Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade must map to the realities of the colony being a free port. What does this mean in practice? For example, the paradigm must consider *intra* slave trade. The free ports were the mechanism for meeting the supply and demand needs of the entire region. Some scholars have specifically stated that the intra-American and intra-Caribbean trade is not part of the transatlantic slave trade and they exclude it in their analysis. This is a logical flaw. Can a consumer goods company properly understand their sales channel if they only analyze the wholesale channel but leave out any analysis of distributors or retailers? The importance of acknowledging the intra slave trade as an integral aspect of the overall transatlantic slave trade cannot be overstated considering that, according to Green-Pedersen, "the proportion of slaves imported from Africa accounted for less than a third of total imports. But almost twice as many slaves came from other parts of the West Indies, whither

almost all exports were sent."[360] Including the *intra* channels into the historical quantification of the transatlantic slave trade does create layers of complexity but it is an absolute requirement for a complete historical record.

This, the analysis concludes that the new historical quantification paradigm for the topic must remove any predisposition or consideration of a mercantile triangular trade route. That predisposition is replaced with a definition of 'Danish participation' that is as much socioeconomic as geopolitical. Lastly, when the paradigm is applied, it must support the realities of the Danish West Indies being a free port.

The paradigm for historical quantification of Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade that should be considered is: identify the unique number of enslaved Africans that were:

- Embarked from Africa where the point of embarkation was under the Danish government, company or citizen control (i.e., Danish Gold Coast), or
- Embarked from Africa on a Danish-flagged ship, or
- Embarked from Africa on a Danish captained ship under a flag of convenience of another country, or
- Embarked from Africa on any ship owned or under contract by Denmark or a Danish company or citizen (i.e., Brandenburg), or
- Embarked from Africa where the point of embarkation was under control by a company or individual under contract by Denmark, a Danish company or citizen (i.e., Brandenburg), or
- Disembarked (permanent) in the Danish West Indies from Africa, or
- Disembarked (permanent) in the Danish West Indies from the Americas (i.e., intra-Caribbean or intra-American trade), or
- Disembarked (temporary) in the Danish West Indies for trans-shipment (i.e., slave markets), or
- Traded/Sold at Port of call within the Danish West Indies (i.e., African slaves were traded/sold for final destination in the Americas but were not disembarked).

[360] Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure," 160.

It is important that when applying the paradigm against the underlying data, all effort is made to ensure there is no duplication of the data; i.e., double counting of a voyage. When applying the paradigm to a voyage by ship dataset such as the TSTD, the data set much go through data de-duplication prior to analysis.

New Data. This research project adds to the historiography of the topic by using quantitative research methods including statistical analysis of existing and new primary data. Primary source documents and data on this topic was accessed from the Danish National Archives in Copenhagen, The U.S. National Archives and Record Administration in Washington, the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database (TSTD sometimes referred to as the Voyages database) – a collection of archival data on 36,000+ slave-trading voyages maintained by Emory University and several collections archived at the Virgin Islands Public Library System in St. Thomas and St. Croix.

When the TSTD was first released in 1999, the database had 27,233 voyage records. The last historical quantification work that has been published referencing Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade was in 2008; *Extending the Frontiers: Essays on the New Transatlantic Slave Trade Database* edited by David Eltis and David Richardson. Today, sixty percent of the slave voyages in the TSTD contained information unavailable in 1999. The current TSTD database contains 36,001 voyages.[361]

The Danish kept impeccable records, which have survived over the years archived at the Danish National Archive in Copenhagen. On March 1, 2017, the project to digitize

[361] "Voyages – The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database," Emory University, accessed June 23, 2018, http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/download.

and electronically archive that data was completed.[362] With the Danish National Archives data now more accessible, it can now be determined that more than 3100 total voyages occurred between the Danish Gold Coast and the Danish West Indies with 88% or 2728 of those voyages conducted by private merchants.[363]

[362] "The Danish West Indies – Sources of History," Danish National Archives, accessed June 4, 2017, https://www.virgin-islands-history.org/en/.

[363] "The Danish West Indies – Sources of History," Danish National Archives, accessed June 4, 2017, https://www.virgin-islands-history.org/en/history/trade-and-shipping/trading-companies-in-the-west-indies/.

V

Conclusions and Issues for Further Research

The final chapter of this thesis has two objectives. First, the thesis hopes to set the record straight. A historical quantification of the Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade must take into account the complex system that managed that trade. With an understanding of the complexities of the Danish transatlantic trade, in this section, we will quantify the Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade. How many enslaved Africans were embarked or disembarked by the Danish? By individuals or entities controlled or on behalf of the Danish? How many enslaved Africans were embarked from Africa or disembarked in the Americas through Danish controlled outposts both in Africa and in the Danish West Indies? How many enslaved Africans were transshipped through Danish territories?

From the earliest empirical analysis, the number of enslaved Africans scholars have attributed to Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade has been steadily rising as more data is found and as the complexity of the slave trade is better understood. Table 9 below attempts to compare the output of various quantifications over the past hundred years. As these works use different time periods when analyzing the data, the author has used a baseline adjustment algorithm to achieve mathematical equivalency. The restated output for each model allows a simple like for like comparison.

Table 9 Previous academic work quantifying Danish participation has been changing.

Model Year	Model	Model Time Period	Danish Participation	Restated Danish Participation 1687 - 1848

1917	Westergaard	1687-1754	16,889	64,792
1969	Curtain	1687-1799	28,000	46,076
1971	Green-Pedersen	1766-1807	58,421	203,527
1982	Lovejoy	1450-1900	77,000	77,000
1995	Per Hernaes	1670-1803	108,000	177,722
2016	TSTD	1501-1803	111,040	155,867

It should be noted that this view is for directional purposes only. It shows at a macro level how academics have viewed over the year's Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade and how these views have been changing over time. These numbers are only to be used to compare models that have been developed over the years. They should not be interpreted as an actual view of Danish participation.

That being said, there is a trend. As more data surface and as the complexities of the slave trade, particularly in the Caribbean, are understood, scholars have been increasing the scale of Danish participation in the slave trade.

New Historical Quantification − Danish Participation in the Transatlantic Slave Trade

The new paradigm for Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade has been applied against the underlying data gathered from various sources. The main source is the 2016 Transatlantic Slave Trade Dataset (TSTD) as available for download on the Voyages website. This data is the most comprehensive voyage specific data available. This dataset has been augmented with data uncovered during the research of this thesis including:

- *Intra* Data. intra-Caribbean and intra-American voyage data known but excluded from the TSTD,
- Danish National Archives. Voyage specific data recently made available from the archiving project completed at the Danish National Archives,
- Misc. Voyage Data. Small amounts of voyage specific data from the various research sources, and
- Misc. African Outpost Data. Misc. data gathered during research regarding African fort and outpost ownership or control by Denmark.

Using the existing physical data model, data dictionary and meta-data of the TSTD, all data were combined and de-duplicated using statistical analysis and modeling software, SPSS version 25.0. The resultant dataset working name is TSTD-Danish.sav. Initial data mining was conducted to determine rough counts. For example, how many slaves were embarked at Danish Gold Coast forts? How many slaves were disembarked at Port Charlotte Amalie by Danish flagged vessels? This data mining was used to develop a component hierarchy based on scale; which component within the Danish transatlantic slave trade ecosystem affected the largest number of enslaved Africans. The components are shown in Table 10.

Table 10 Components of the Danish transatlantic slave trade ecosystem

Danish slave trade ecosystem component	Component Description
Embarked Danish Gold Coast-Direct	Embarked from Africa where the point of embarkation was under the Danish government, company or citizen control (i.e., Danish Gold Coast), or
Embarked Danish Flagged	Embarked from Africa on a Danish-flagged ship, or
Embarked Danish Captain	Embarked from Africa on a Danish captained ship under a flag of convenience of another country, or
Embarked Danish Owned	Embarked from Africa on any ship owned or under contract by Denmark or a Danish company or citizen (i.e., Brandenburg), or
Embarked Africa - Indirect	Embarked from Africa where the point of embarkation was under control by a company or individual under contract by Denmark, a Danish company or citizen (i.e., Brandenburg), or

Danish slave trade ecosystem component	Component Description
Disembarked DWI from Africa – Perm	Disembarked (permanent) in the Danish West Indies from Africa, or
Disembarked DWI from Intra – Perm	Disembarked (permanent) in the Danish West Indies from the Americas (i.e., inter-Caribbean or inter-American trade), or
Disembarked DWI – Temp	Disembarked (temporary) in the Danish West Indies for trans-shipment (i.e., slave markets), or
Port of call at DWI – no disembark	Traded/Sold at Port of call within the Danish West Indies (i.e., African slaves were traded/sold for final destination in the Americas but were not disembarked).

This methodology results in a voyage (and the slaves in that voyage) being tagged to a specific component of the Danish transatlantic slave trade ecosystem if in fact they were touched by that component. For example, if a voyage was identified as embarking from the Danish Gold Coast with 185 slaves, that voyage and those 185 slaves would be tagged as Danish Gold Coast-embarked. The de-duplication process will not allow that same voyage and those slaves to be tagged against any subsequent component of the ecosystem.

The end output is shown in Table 10; a quantification of Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade.

Table 11 Historical quantification of Danish participation in the slave trade.

Danish slave trade ecosystem component	Number of voyages (ships) affected	Number of Slaves Disembarked	Number of Slaves Embarked
Disembarked DWI from Africa – Perm	381	92667	108482
Embarked – Danish Flagged	199	35314	42842
Embarked Danish Gold Coast	192	41088	50019
Embarked Danish Captain	212	39856	47512

Danish slave trade ecosystem component	Number of voyages (ships) affected	Number of Slaves Disembarked	Number of Slaves Embarked
Embarked Danish Owned	54	11448	13521
Embarked Africa - Indirect	146	28178	33463
Disembarked DWI from Intra – Perm	359	50978	52116
Disembarked DWI – Temp	1149	188436	193539
Port of call at DWI – no disembark	346	59858	72354
Uplift @ 2.7%		14791	16573
Total		562614	630421

The role of Denmark in the transatlantic slave trade was extensive. The colonies of the Americas were not well suited for a traditional empire-colony relationship that was designed around the mercantile economic beliefs prevalent during the time. The Danish faced a myriad number of obstacles that prevented them from initiating a strict one-nation triangular trade route. The location of the supply country, the Danish West Indies, was as far away to the Danish homeland as could be imagined at the time. The distance challenge was indelibly linked to the fact that colonization was tabula rasa; blank slate. The Danes needed to build out the infrastructure for a new country. The need was not that of re-supply, the Danes were starting from scratch and needed a wide variety of tools, supplies, and labor for this endeavor.

The Danish found their answer in “colonization by invitation.” The scale of the need required an international effort. Over time, the Danish established a complex network of inter-relationships and inter-dependencies with foreign nations, companies, and individuals. They designed a socioeconomic and political framework in the Danish West Indies that was inviting to foreigners, from merchants to sea captains to political

refugees and to freedmen. Sometimes codified in law, other times in social practice, the Danish West Indies was a free port. It was the hub of a vast network of relationships that gave rise to a thriving economy based less on agrarian output and more on regional trade. The trade volume became so great that the vast majority of shipping was not too Africa or through the triangular trade route. It was merchant traffic keeping up with the demand for manufactured goods. "The majority of ships leaving Denmark-Norway went directly to the Caribbean and back in this period. Of the 3000 transatlantic voyages that were launched from Denmark-Norway during the 18th century, only about 260 of these sailed the whole route via the Gold Coast to the Danish West Indies."[364]

Ingrained into this unique and complex socioeconomic, geopolitical system is the transatlantic slave trade. The complete opposite of monolithic, the Danish slave trade ecosystem had a hub at Charlotte Amalie, but its spokes penetrated throughout the Caribbean. The ecosystem equalized slave supply and demand amongst the colonies of the Caribbean by serving as entrepôt. The colony provided mechanisms for open trade amongst countries, merchants, individuals and even interlopers allowing them to convert slave revenue and profit into more expansive commerce. It is precisely this Danish eco-system that had an oversized impact on the transatlantic slave trade. The number of slaves retained for labor in the Danish West Indies was relatively small; no more than 25,000 at any given point in time. However, the Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade was large. From 1687 to 1848, this Danish-led ecosystem processed 630,421 unique, enslaved Africans into the New World. In quantifiable numbers, this establishes

[364] Lavik, "Small Players," 6.

Denmark as the fifth largest slave trader in the Atlantic. When compared with the population of Denmark, the slave trade would be comparable to over 25% of the entire population of Denmark. In contrast, the French only traded enough slaves to account for less than 3% of the French empire's population. Therefore, for the size of their empire, the Danish presence in the slave trade was remarkably high.

The Revised Danish Legacy

The Danish legacy relative to the transatlantic slave trade has historically been very progressive. Denmark was a small player in the overall slave trade, ranking 7 out of the 7 major colonial powers. However, the Danes were progressive, and over time they gave their slaves a better quality of life than other countries by providing those rights and privileges. Eventually, the Danes created a path where they abolished their participation in the slave trade and in 1848 they gave all slaves in the Danish colony their freedom.

This is the existing legacy.

This thesis concludes that underlying this legacy is inaccurate data and a false narrative. The Danish had a leading role in the transatlantic slave trade. The Danish created a socioeconomic and geopolitical environment that could maximize the commercial value of the transatlantic slave trade for Denmark. They created a Danish slave trade ecosystem of complex inter-relationships between countries, geographies, companies, merchants, governments, and individuals designed to maximize commerce for the Danish West Indies and Denmark. From 1687 through 1848, well after the Danish on paper had abolished their participation in the slave trade, 630,421 unique, enslaved Africans moved through various components of the Danish system making Denmark the fifth largest slave trader.

The Danish system in and of itself was a vital aspect in the development and growth of not just the Danish West Indies, but also the entire region. The Danish colony served as the mechanism to rebalance slave supply and demand. The open trade status of the colony allowed all nations and all merchants to have access to both inbound and outbound slave trade. As conflicts arose in Europe disrupting supply and demand, the Danish West Indies ecosystem filled in the gaps. When new colonies hit a growth period such as Cuba, the Danish ecosystem filled the gap. When counties like Spain did not have the trade route connections or infrastructure to handle the necessary slave supply, the Danish ecosystem filled the gaps.

It must be recognized that the Danish slave trade ecosystem was not only the supporting structure for the regional slave trade; it was also the supporting structure for overall trade and commerce regionally. The Danish colony developed a thriving merchant class. A welcoming environment for foreign merchants and capital, the Danish colony, provided an open port where the colonies of the region could trade amongst themselves regardless of the monolithic trade restrictions that the more mercantile-oriented European overseers put into place. The Danish West Indies merchants and commercial trade were a key link in converting the profits of the slave trade and slave labor into goods, services and useable capital for many countries, companies, and individuals regardless of nationality.

As stated earlier, the maritime slave voyages in number became a small part of the overall maritime trade in the region. The demand for manufactured goods was high throughout the Caribbean with the Danish West Indies being the free port for all nations to conduct trade. This demand was powering the economy and industrial production in

Denmark. The sugar industry in Copenhagen was thriving; producing more sugar than needed by the country creating a lucrative export market. The textiles industry in Nantes was expanding rapidly. While ignoring mercantile principles, Denmark now had an enviable balance of trade with its neighbors. "A Danish merchant was requested by the government to give his views on the state of commerce; he said that West Indian islands were, by far, an essential basis of Danish commerce."[365]

With the Danish transatlantic slave trade ecosystem, why would the Danish through the edict of 1792 abolish its participation in the slave trade? The narrative most often given is that it was for a combination of humanitarian and economic reasons. The Danes wanted to get ahead of the burgeoning abolitionist movement. And, the actual direct trade of slaves; importation of slaves from the Danish Gold Coast to the Danish West Indies was both costly and dangerous. The facts do not support this narrative or the resulting legacy.

First, the Danes edict of 1792 to abolish the slave trade was actually designed to make the slave trade grow and be more profitable. The Danes did not want to get out of the slave trade. They wanted to get out of the slave transport business. So, they designed an edict renouncing transportation of slaves by Danish citizens while still allowing all foreign nationalities to transport slaves and trade them in the Danish West Indies. The Danes very shrewdly performed some routine supply chain management optimization. They took the component of the supply chain that was most underperforming and eliminated it. They then were able to redeploy those underperforming resources to

[365] Green-Pedersen, "The History," 214-215.

concentrate on more productive endeavors. For the Danes, this was growing their foreign trade and trade with independent merchants. This included the slave trade. The policy worked with much success as both slave and merchant trade expanded rapidly in the Danish trading ecosystem in the late 1700's and early to mid-1800s.

The legacy of the Danish to date in reference to the slave trade has been a small player with a larger heart than most. In reality, the Danish had one of the most extensive slave-based trading ecosystems in the region. They were the fifth largest country in the slave trade volume. The profit and capital that was being generated in the Danish West Indies were powering a commercial and industrial revolution in Denmark. The Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade was both extensive and profitable, and the Danish were holding on to that business and growing it. Unfortunately, it all came crashing down not from any type of humanitarian edict from the Crown. It came from an armed rebellion. The enslaved Africans of the Danish West Indies were granted their freedom in 1848 after an uprising. It was only then that the slave trade in the Danish West Indies truly stopped.

William Faulkner once quipped, "[t]he past is never dead. In fact, it is not even past."[366] Scholars study and analyze history with the assumption that "what we think of as political change masks deeper underlying continuities with the past."[367] The previous Danish colonies now known as the United States Virgin Islands have societal challenges

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[366] William Faulkner, Requiem for a Nun Act 1, Sc 3, 1951.

[367] Jason Wittenberg, Michael Bernhard, and Krzysztof Jasiewicz. "Conceptualizing Historical Legacies," *East European Politics & Societies and Cultures* 29, no. 2 (2015): 366-378.

that can be directly mapped back to their colonial past. Having a firm understanding of the historical legacy is one step in moving to a new future.

Issues for Further Research

The research for this thesis leaves as many unanswered questions as ones that have been answered. However, there exists one main issue that makes answering questions challenging. The issue is access to data. Any topic related to the Danish West Indies is difficult to research as primary data and documents are now scattered between the U.S. Virgin Islands, Denmark, and the United States. Just after the U.S. purchased the Virgin Islands from Denmark, the Danish sent representatives to the islands to collect and ship to Denmark the records of the colonial administration. They were thorough in their work. Except for property records, more than 250 years of the island's history was removed and is now in the Danish National Archives in Copenhagen. Some records not directly associated either with the Danish government or the Danish charter companies were spared. However, many of those records were removed by representatives of the United States in the 1940s and sent to the U.S. National Archives. These records have not been digitized and are difficult to access. When access does allow these records to be reviewed, language is also an issue. Most of the colonial records are in Danish. However, due to the polyglot nature of the community that the Danes built, it is routine to come across documents in Dutch, Creole, French, and English. In the research for this thesis, language hampered the ability to review much of the data that we know is there; waiting for the light of day.

Many of the unanswered questions undoubtedly have answers within these records stored in distant lands. During this research project, many islanders have shared a common desire to have their history returned to them so they can work to answer the unanswered.

Questions that remain for additional research include:

1. Economic accounting; revenue. The paradigm developed for this thesis allows for a historical quantification of the number of enslaved Africans passing through various Danish systems. It would be valuable to determine the direct economic value of that traffic. In the slave commission that was run by Schimmelmann, the colonial government calculated the average price which slaves were sold on St. Croix between the years of 1778 and 1787. It was 214 rigsdaler. The commission subsequently estimated the average expense for each slave to reach the Danish West Indies at 94 rigsdalers.[368] Quick math indicates an upside range that the Danish slave traffic generated would be $135,339,378 rigsdaler of revenue and $75,891,240 of profit. In today's currency, that is the equivalent of over $2.7B in revenue today. A true economic impact analysis of the Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade would be of value to the historical record.
2. Danish tax revenue. The Danish monarchy taxed the Danish slave trade during various time periods. Sometimes this tax revenue was collected directly by the Crown. Other times it was collected by the administering Charter company. The Danish were meticulous record keepers. There is much reference in the records to

[368] Loftin, "The Abolition of the Danish Atlantic Slave Trade," 57.

tax revenue being forwarded to the Crown. However, those specific records to quantify that data have not been discovered. We do know that at various times the tax rate for one slave entering the territory was 25 rigsdaler. Using simple math, that indicates an upside tax collection by the Crown of $15,760,525 rigsdaler. An economic accounting of the amount of this tax revenue and whom and how it was distributed would be of interest.

3. Danish companies. There are records of many individual companies, merchant houses, and individuals that were immersed in the Danish slave trade ecosystem. Some of these entities were successful. Others had less success. Of value would be deep research on the companies and individuals that were impactful to the growth and success of the Danish transatlantic slave trade.
4. Intra slave trade. One component of the Danish slave trade ecosystem that results in a significant change in scale to Danish participation in the slave trade is the intra-Caribbean and intro-American slave trade. This aspect of the transatlantic slave trade has received less scholarly attention. Research to develop a ship-voyage specific dataset of the intra trade that would be similar and complementary to the TSTD would result in a complete view of the overall slave labor supply chain in the Americas.

Appendix 1

Tables of Danish Participation Slave Voyages

The Excel file embedded below provides different views of the Danish participation in the transatlantic slave trade including time series and geographic breakout.



Detail-Danish Participation

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