Barbadian Adventurers and Market Frontiers: Barbados and the Atlantic's Commercial Geography, 1627-1700

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Bachelor of Arts, Loyola University Chicago, 2018

Master of Arts, Loyola University Chicago, 2019

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Arts

Corcoran Department of History

University of Virginia

5 May 2022

Barbados and the Intercolonial Atlantic World

During the seventeenth century, the island colony of Barbados attracted the attention of merchants and investors through the strength of its market, and many Barbadians became the wealthiest settlers in England's Atlantic empire. Contemporaries called Barbados a "Spatious and profitable Garden," one that "by all the Sweet Negotiation of Sugar" cultivation prospered. Elite Barbadians accrued vast fortunes and estates, commanded hundreds of servants and slaves, and established commercial and political connections across the Atlantic world. Vessels from Africa, Bermuda, England, the Chesapeake, New England, and other places anchored in Barbados's port of Bridgetown to exchange commodities, ferry migrants, and purchase rum, sugar, and slaves. With ships on its shores, and an increasing amount of wealth invested in its enterprise, Barbados's plantation economy flourished. Indeed, by the 1650s, a group of opportunistic Barbadian adventurers seized undeveloped frontiers with the intent to enlarge their fortunes and England's mercantile realm. Adventurers led by Sir Thomas Modyford, Francis Lord Willoughby, Sir John Colleton, and Sir John Yeamans moved in diaspora from Barbados and across the Atlantic world. Barbadians engaged in business and planting in Antigua and Surinam by the 1650s and in Jamaica, St. Lucia, and Carolina by the 1660s. Some of these adventurers leapt aboard ships themselves; others managed their affairs from Barbados by sending agents, servants, and slaves abroad; but together their actions incorporated new market frontiers into the Atlantic's commercial geography.[1]

My argument advances in three stages. First, during the sugar boom era of the 1640s, 1650s, and 1660s, Barbadian merchants and planters devoted their island to sugar cultivation

[1] Jack P. Greene, *Imperatives, Behaviors, and Identities: Essays in Early American History* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1992), 28; Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes . . .* (London, 1673), 96.

through servitude and slavery, but sugar plantations lacked self-sufficiency, so they relied on imports to maintain production. As a result, Bridgetown became a mercantile hub linked to multiple commodities markets. Second, Barbados, on the basis of its favorable access to trade routes, functioned as the gateway through which other colonial ventures occurred. The settling of Surinam and conquest of Jamaica; once in English hands during the 1650s and 1660s, Barbadians adventurers acted as agents of colonization who turned these frontiers into reliable and lucrative markets. They did this by sending their servants, their slaves, or even themselves abroad. Third, Carolina illustrates how Barbadian adventurers expanded the commercial geography of the Atlantic world by organizing intercolonial trade. When the adventurers engaged with Carolina, fewer Barbadians proved willing to migrate overseas. Yet, the adventurers communicated and conducted business with proprietors, colonial officials, merchants, and ship captains to ensure that commodities, provisions, and peoples flowed into Charles Town, Carolina. Those living in Carolina, including the "Barbados Party" and "Goose Creek men," searched for commodities and became leading participants in Carolina's Native deerskin and slave trade in the 1670s, 1680s, and 1690s.

This essay contributes to a historiographic tradition that unearths a rich world of intercolonial commerce and connectedness. Colonial societies acted according to the self-interest of the elite wealth holders who governed them. Even further, they played a decisive role in the growth of England's colonial realm in the Americas through their oceanic connections and mercantile activities. For instance, Ian Steele's *The English Atlantic* (1986) emphasizes how ocean currents and winds affected intercolonial communications, trade, and settlement. In addition to cargo and settlers, merchant ships also spread current political news and knowledge of market conditions. Trade routes thus intertwined the developments of major English ports.

Likewise, in *Atlantic Virginia* (2004), April Lee Hatfield examines how Virginia's "intercolonial networks" connected Virginian culture and society to English, Dutch, French, and Spanish colonies. Mobile mariners stimulated intercolonial exchanges, ranging from the growth of New England Puritanism to the spread of Barbadian slave legislation. Michael J. Jarvis's *In the Eye of All Trade* (2010) centers Bermuda in the "maritime Atlantic world" and emphasizes Bermuda's role as a seafaring settlement and provisions supplier for other English colonies. Bermuda's maritime economy ensured that its settlers moved fluidly throughout the Atlantic and anchored at nearly every British seaport.[2]

Through the lens of maritime commerce, the boundaries of colonial societies often blurred. I add to this body of scholarship through the example of seventeenth-century Barbados. My concept of commercial geography – the mercantile landscape of ports and ocean routes that structured England's Atlantic economy - reinforces historians' consciousness of maritime spatial connections. Barbados and other island societies may have been physically isolated, with borders of water rather than contiguous territorial borders, but English Barbadians thrived precisely because theirs was a society deeply embedded in the Atlantic's commercial geography. Nuala Zahedieh's *The Capital and the Colonies* (2010) locates London, England at the gravitational center of England's Atlantic economy; but Bridgetown, Barbados became a vital commercial center too, and one located within the colonial realm. For merchants engaged in the sugar trade, Barbados served as the prime producer and frequently the first stop on their trade route; for English slavers operating off the coast of West Africa, Barbados provided a reliable market

[2] Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic 1675-1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986): 3-18; April Lee Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia: Intercolonial Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004): 1-7; Michael J. Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians, and the Maritime Atlantic World, 1680-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 1-9.

hungry for more plantation laborers; for fisherman, herders of livestock, hewers of wood, and countless craftsmen and tailors, Barbados demanded clothing, foodstuffs, and supplies.[3]

Heedless of the human toll of their actions, the Barbadian adventurers seized the initiative in the market frontiers of Jamaica, Surinam, and Carolina and exploited their untapped commercial potential. Historians do not associate the concept of the frontier with the West Indian colonies. However, many Barbadians treated undeveloped spaces bordering the Atlantic and near maritime trade routes in much the same fashion that mainlanders treated the North American interior. Thoroughly knowledgeable of how Atlantic commerce operated, with an ear to market conditions, and armed with capital and credit, Barbadian adventurers including Sir Thomas Modyford and Sir John Yeamans pulled these market frontiers into Barbados's orbit. Adventurers identified salable goods; they provided the resources needed to acquire the goods; and finally, they utilized personal and professional connections to pass the goods onto merchant ships and into markets where they could be consumed or traded. The Barbadian adventurers embodied a different category of the agents of colonization: they were not the founders of stable societies, nor were they architects of religious havens, but instead, they were exploitative commercial organizers. They proved remarkably successful in this regard and spearheaded the growth of England's Atlantic economy.

Finally, my emphasis on commercial geography highlights actors who animated the intercolonial world yet disappeared from local histories that viewed colonial ventures as predestined to become colonies, states, or nations and so only focused on resident settlers. In this respect, this essay contributes to the historiography of the "Barbados-Carolina connection." The

[3] See Nuala Zahedieh, *The Capital and the Colonies: London and the Atlantic Economy, 1660-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) for a full treatment of London's merchant community and the colonial trades.

first wave of scholarship highlighted Barbadians' influence in Carolina and searched for the "Barbadian identity" of early settlers active in Carolina's political and social development. Yet, a subsequent wave of scholars questioned this influence because so few elite Barbadians actually settled in Carolina. My perspective aligns with that of Justin Roberts and Ian Beamish, who note that the "Barbadian influence in Carolina resulted from the influx of capital and from wealthy and well-situated individuals." Indeed, an estimated 200 Barbadians traveled to Carolina between 1670 and 1700, a figure that shows their limited influence as migrants. But this figure hides the Barbadians' more significant influence as commercial organizers. The proprietor Sir John Colleton; his eldest son, proprietor Sir Peter Colleton; wealthy planters Sir John Yeamans and Nathanial Kingsland; leading merchants Thomas Colleton and John Strode: each of these wealthy Barbadians invested in the market frontier of Carolina from Barbados's shores. They forged connections between Carolina's fledgling Charles Town and Barbados's bustling Bridgetown, and elsewhere, and bolstered Carolina's development by linking its enterprises to a commercial geography centered in Bridgetown. By spreading commerce and colonization to new market frontiers, the Barbadian adventurers integrated the societies of the island and mainland colonies and influenced the developmental trajectory of both.[4]

[4] Justin Roberts and Ian Beamish, "Venturing Out: The Barbadian Diaspora and the Carolina Colony, 1650-1685" in *Creating and Contesting Carolina: Proprietary Era Histories* edited by Michelle LeMaster and Bradford J. Wood (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2013), 59; Peter F. Campbell, *Some Early Barbadian History* (Barbados: Caribbean Graphics and Letchworth Ltd., 1993), 153. For scholarship that highlights the Barbadian influence, see John P. Thomas, "The Barbadians in Early South Carolina," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 31, no. 2 (1930): 75-92; M. Eugene Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina: A Political History 1663-1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966); Peter Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1974); Jack P. Greene, "Colonial South Carolina and the Caribbean Connection," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 88, no. 4 (1987): 192-210; and Richard Dunn, "The English Sugar Islands and the Founding of South Carolina," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 101, no. 2 (2000): 142-154. For scholarship that questions the number of Barbadians in Carolina, see Pete F. Campbell, *Some Early Barbadian History*; Kinloch Bull, "Barbadian Settlers in Early Carolina: Historiographical Notes," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 96, no. 4 (1995): 329-339; Louis H. Roper, *Conceiving Carolina: Proprietors, Planters, and Plots, 1662-1729* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

Barbados's Sugar Trade and Commercial Connections: 1630s-1700

By the middle of the seventeenth century, Barbados underwent a staggering transformation. What initially appeared to English elites as a small island suitable for tobacco cultivation steadily became a competitive and commercially robust slave society with massive stores of capital in the form of slave labor forces, land and machinery, and substantial book credits in the ledgers of English merchant partners. Merchants from across the English Atlantic called to its port of Bridgetown to exchange goods for the sugar grown by servants and slaves, and Barbadian elites prospered at the expense of those around them.

This transformation began with the land itself. When English settlers arrived in 1627, dense forests of locust, cedar, and mangrove trees covered the island's 166 square miles. By the time the English arrived, Spanish slaving raids had depopulated the island, leaving Barbados as a veritable wilderness, overrun with wild hogs, and little space for housing and animal pasturage. Servants and slaves felled these gargantuan trees and prepared arable land for planting at the cost of their lives. Throughout the 1630s and 1640s much of Barbados remained forested and ill-prepared for extensive plantation agriculture, and much of the cleared land was located around the leeward coast, close to Bridgetown and the harbor of Carlisle Bay. During these first decades, with settlers and supplies ferried from England, Barbadians planted potatoes, maize, and poor-quality tobacco, and raised and hunted hogs. According to contemporary Richard Ligon, planters "found" sugar cane in the 1640s, and it became the "main plant, to improve the value of the whole Island." Encouraged by the promising profits of sugar cultivation, Barbadians intensified the land clearing process around mid-century. During the 1650s and 1660s, most of Barbados had been divided into acres and parishes, appearing as "one great City" for those arriving by sea. By the 1670s, Barbados became "so taken up in Plantations" that it seemed there was "no wast

ground to be found." In sum, over the course of 50 years, Barbados became an island ready for transatlantic commerce and its planters and merchants commanded capital and resources.[5]

The gradual felling of the trees and clearing of the land provides a basic timeline for the growth of Barbados's economy and the island's rise as a commercial hub. Barbadians cleared and parceled-out land because they wished to grow lucrative commodities upon it. In pursuit of this goal, Barbados's society and economy took on a distinct form: prosperous individuals consolidated their landed holdings, commanded a population of indentured servant and African slave laborers, and partnered with merchants who carried their cash-crops to markets across the Atlantic. During the late 1620s and 1630s, Barbadians hoped to exploit the profits of tobacco, a cash-crop which served early Virginian planters well. Tobacco required a modest amount of capital, land, and labor. Shrewd planters reinvested the profits earned from their tobacco harvest back into their estates, increasing the number of tracts tilled and importing more servants and slaves. However, since Barbadian tobacco was of notoriously poor quality and competed with the Chesapeake's tobacco markets, Barbadian planters also experimented with other crops. Thus, by the late 1630s and early 1640s, Barbadians grew tobacco as well as cotton, indigo, and ginger. Indigo, specifically, encouraged the further concentration of capital because it required more man hours to cultivate than tobacco. These diversified crops energized Barbados's early economy, and many planters continued to grow them after sugar became the island's primary crop.[6]

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[5] Ligon, *True and Exact History*, 23-24; Richard Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 51-53; Greene, "Changing Identities," 27; Greene, "Colonial South Carolina and the Caribbean Connection," 194.
[6] Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 19-25.

The export boom of the 1630s taught Barbadians how to succeed in transatlantic commerce: if Barbadians could productively deploy their labor force and grow desirable commodities on their estates, they would make Barbados a commercial hub. When Barbadians turned to sugar cultivation during the 1640s, this process intensified. Much like for tobacco, cotton, and indigo, English markets placed high demand on sugar. Yet, unlike the earlier cash-crops, nearly no other English colony cultivated sugar during the first-half of the seventeenth century. This market environment, of high demand and low supply, initiated a frenzied rush for self-enrichment amongst ambitious Barbadians. Furthermore, since sugar cultivation required larger estates, a greater labor force, and more expensive machinery than tobacco, cotton, or indigo, the Barbadians who cultivated sugar concentrated their island's resources, natural and human, in their own hands. Middling and elite planters bought up their neighbor's land, imported more servants, began importing African slaves, and erected sugar mills, boilers, and still-houses. This mechanization of sugar processing proceeded at such a rate that, by 1680, the 175 wealthiest planters on the island owned 53.4 percent of all acreage, 53.9 percent of all servants, and 54.3 percent of all slaves. Crucially, the economic transformation of Barbados's sugar boom coincided with a series of political and social developments that further empowered sugar planters. Members of the elite class acted as minor officials, militia leaders, assembly members, and even governors. Indeed, a distinct hierarchy emerged, wherein wealthy planters stood above the smaller landowners, the landless, and servants and slaves. Barbadian elites possessed an aggressive mentality for self-enrichment, and the political, social, and economic environment of Barbados reflected their commercial aspirations.[7]

[7] Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 4, 68; Zahedieh, *The Capital and the Colonies*, 210-226; Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 84-116.

As a prime example of a successful Barbadian sugar planter, Thomas Modyford affords a close examination of how and why Barbadian elites deepened their island's commitment to sugar cultivation and the Atlantic marketplace. On 14 June 1647, Richard Ligon, an ex-Royalist down on his luck after the turbulent events of the English Civil War, traveled to Barbados with Thomas Modyford. For three years Ligon worked for Modyford, observing how plantations operated and calculating their scale and profitability. Ligon's account, published in 1657 under the title *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, detailed the actions, aspirations, and concerns of prominent planters during the transformative era of the sugar boom. "[U]pon discourse with some of the most knowing men of the Island," Ligon wrote, "we found it was far better, for a man that had money, goods, and Credit, to purchase a Plantation there ready furnished and stock't with Servants, Slaves, Horses, Cattle." Ligon recognized that if a planter started from nothing, and had to clear the land, erect buildings, and import laborers, he would encounter "all hardships, and a tedious expectation, of what profit or pleasure may arise." Some Barbadians did start from scratch - the "Barbados custom" of reinvesting profits into an estate - but Ligon's employer Modyford avoided this scenario. He paid William Hilliard £7,000, in increments, for his 500 acre estate. This decision expedited Modyford's success because the estate already contained many of the prerequisites of a successful cash-crop plantation, including a sugar mill, boiling house and cauldrons, filling room, and other instruments of production, alongside African and native slaves, European servants, and cattle and horses.[8]

Barbadians like Modyford entered the competitive world of the sugar boom: they bought up the small parcels of land held by poorer settlers and transformed them into productive fields of sugar cane. Ligon celebrated this fact, and he associated it with the island's success: "And I

[8] Ligon, *True and Exact History*, 22.

believe, when the small Plantations in poor men's hands, of ten, twenty, or thirty acres … be bought up by great men, and put together, into Plantations of five, six, and seven hundred acres, that two thirds of the Island will be fit for Plantations of Sugar" and will make Barbados "one of the richest Spots of earth under the Sun." Ligon's wish came true. Very few property holders in 1638 appeared in the Barbados census records of 1680. Those that did featured among the island's elite, including the prominent families Allyn, Drax, Guy, Pears, and Yeamans. Other elite families, like Colleton, Modyford, Willoughby, and Thornhill, bought-in during the 1640s and 1650s. Furthermore, Ligon's account suggested that personal and political connections in both Barbados and England contributed to the rise of these elites. For example, Ligon wrote that Thomas Modyford entered a transatlantic partnership almost immediately after his arrival on the island. William Hilliard, a seasoned Barbadian planter and councillor, returned to England after selling half of his estate to Modyford. While Modyford developed and organized the plantation in Barbados, Hilliard managed the sale of sugar from England. They shared equally the profits of the enterprise, at least initially. Modyford's arrangement proved successful. Indeed, between 1640 and 1650, when many future elites settled on the island, 75 English merchants, mostly from London, poured nearly £25,000 into Barbados's plantation infrastructure. Thomas Kendall, Modyford's brother-in-law and business partner, and John Colleton, Modyford's cousin, featured among those merchant investors. Both Kendall and Colleton eventually settled in Barbados and lived as wealthy sugar planters.[9]

In his account, Ligon also suggested how Barbadians should organize their tillable land in a manner that favored sugar cultivation but also permitted Barbados's self-sustainability.

[9] Ligon, *True and Exact History*, 22, 86; Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 58, 95-96; Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies 1623-1775* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973), 137; Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 52-61, 147-148.

Consistent with his desire that "two thirds of the Island will be fit for Plantations of Sugar," Ligon recommended that Modyford set aside the less-arable lands on his estate for cattle pasturage, hog raising, and food cultivation. In general, Ligon noted that certain areas of Barbados, such as the deep gullies surrounding the port of Bridgetown, would be ideal regions for non-sugar agriculture and pasturage. Further, Ligon recognized that many poorer planters would refuse to sell their lands despite owning too few acres upon which to cultivate sugar cultivation. These poorer men should instead use their land to "bear Tobacco, Ginger, Cotton-wool, Maies, Yeames, and Potatoes, as also for breeding Hoggs … which they may live plentifully upon; for those provisions they raised, will sell at good rates."[10]

However, in this respect Ligon erred. He underestimated the allure of the profits of sugar cultivation. Over the course of the seventeenth century, elite Barbadians increased the scale of their sugar works and invested in more servants and slaves to labor in them. In 1645, George Downing remarked about the planters' purchase of slaves, noting that "the more they buie, the better able are they to buye, for in a year and a halfe they will earne (with gods blessing) as much as they cost." The wealthier planters did exactly this, and Ligon even noted their enthusiasm and entrepreneurial vision. "Colonel James Drax," wrote Ligon, "would not look toward England … till he were able to purchase an estate of ten thousand pound land yearly," and "Colonel Thomas Modiford, has often told me, that he had taken a Resolution to himself, not to set his face for England" until he owned "an hundred thousand pounds sterling; and all by this Sugar plant." Modyford and Drax expressed an avaricious mentality and implied that Barbados, rather than serve as their permanent residence, would serve as a temporary platform to their economic advancement. Even poorer planters exported small amounts of sugar and molossus, in part

[10] Ligon, *True and Exact History*, 96.

working as tenants for wealthier planters. In turn, the provision and pasturage lands grew smaller, and Barbados relied heavily on external markets for basic foodstuffs and other supplies.[11]

Ironically, Barbadians' unwavering commitment to sugar cultivation served their island well. Barbados's reliance on provisions, material goods, and luxuries from English and colonial markets cemented its role as a central market in the Atlantic's commercial geography. An island with ships routinely on its horizons and merchants always at the port, Bridgetown housed the major trades of England's colonial ventures. Settled as The Bridge in the Bay of Carlisle in 1628, Bridgetown initially remained a small outpost surrounded by swamps and marshlands. Although it became the political center for the Barbados Assembly in 1638, most planters still lived around the coasts and in the interior. However, the trade spurred by the sugar boom transformed Bridgetown into the chief town for trade. For instance, the French priest Father Antoine Biet traveled to Barbados in 1654 in the midst of the boom. Biet remarked that Bridgetown "is heavily populated, above all with merchants, because it is to this place that all people from the country districts transport the goods and wares that are produced on their plantations." As Biet recognized, merchants resident in Bridgetown partnered with planters across the island, and their joint actions permitted the flow of capital and commodities. Cartographer Richard Ford too recognized the bustle of Bridgetown. On his 1675 work *A New Map of the Island of Barbadoes*, Ford gave Bridgetown pride of place at the top of the map, even though it resided in the island's southwest corner, and he illustrated the network of roads issuing from the port into the plantation interior. Further, Ford wrote on the map's cartouche that "to these 4 places [the ports of

[11] Ligon, *True and Exact History*, 116, 94; George Downing (1645) quoted in McCuster and Menard, "The Sugar Industry in the Seventeenth Century," in *Tropical Babylons: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680*, edited by Stuart Schwartz (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2004): 280-321, 283; Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 272-273.

Bridgetown, Charles Town, James Town, and Little Bristol in Barbados] resort yearly 200 Vessels of all kinds." And Ford detailed the contents of those vessels: "The principal Comodities this Island produces are Sugar of all sorts vz Muscovado, clayed & refined; as also Cotton, Ginger, Aloes, Logwood Fustick green & yellow & Lignum … besides some Indico and Tobacco" and "Provision … chiefly furnished from our other American Plantations."[12]

The sugar trade placed Bridgetown, Barbados in the center of the English commercial world and ensured that its residents witnessed the familiar sight of merchant ships bobbing in its bustling bays. "[T]here hath been, and is, a very faire Correspondency held with England, New England, Holland, Hambrough, and other places," wrote Nicholas Foster in 1650. "There being many millions of Sugars transported from thence yearely, and the number of Ships that come yearly to that Island, not lesse then a hundred Sayle; the commodities (being not onely Sugar) but also Indico, Ginger, with Cotton-wools, and some small quantities of Tobacco." Two decades later, on 31 May 1670, Colonel Robert Rich composed a letter arguing against the "very short and erroneous" treatment of his island in the 1666 *English Atlas*. His letter reveals the esteem Barbadians held towards their island's role in Atlantic commerce. The "Bay is call'd Carlisle Bay," wrote Rich, "and lieth on the South-West part of the Island near its Center, and is a good Road, where five hundred Ships of any Burthen may Ride safely." "The Shipping that comes to Trade to this Island," Rich continued, "belongs generally to England; some few Vessels are here built, and pass to and fro to the Leeward Islands; and some belong to New England, Bermudas, &c. The number of Vessels which come hither to Trade in one year is found upon

[12] Mary Draper, "The 'metropolis of the island' and the 'Thames of the West Indies': Early Modern Bridgetown, Barbados, 1627-1766," MA thesis (University of Virginia, 2013), 1-42; Jerome Handler, "Father Antoine Biet's Visit to Barbados in 1654," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society* 32 (1967): 56-76, 65; Richard Ford, *A New Map of the Island of Barbadoes wherein every Parish, Plantation, Watermill, Windmill & Cattlemill, is described* [London, 1675-76].

search to be about two hundred of all sorts." Rich then addressed the sugar trade directly, highlighting the commercial geography it animated, stating that "the greatest part of which Ships re-load with Sugars for England, and many go for New-England, Bermudas, Virginia, Tangier."[13]

From the 1640s and 1650s, Barbadians imported barrel staves, corn grain, dried beef and pork, livestock, naval stores, shingles, and tobacco from the Chesapeake. From New England, Barbadians imported cooking utensils, flour, livestock, lumber, mackerel, and sturgeon. From the West Indies, including islands like Bermuda, Barbados received cattle, fruits, settlers, and vegetables. With commercial networks established, Barbados exported to these distant markets cotton, molasses, rum, slaves, and sugar. In fact, by 1680, Barbadian planters and merchants carried more sugar to New England than all other territories in the English Atlantic combined, excluding England itself. The elite Barbadian class, styling itself as a New World gentry, also desired finer luxuries and indulgences. They imported silk coats and pantaloons, expensive furniture, and Madeira and brandy from England and Europe. Indeed, from 1681 through 1700, a period for which records survive, at least 1,860 ships arrived at Barbados. Of these vessels, 566 came from England and Ireland. The number of intercolonial voyages proved higher with 793 ships arriving from England's North American colonies, including 681 from New England and 107 from the Chesapeake, and with 246 ships arriving from the West Indian colonies. Furthermore, connections with West Africa, especially the Bight of Biafra, Bight of Benin, and Gold Coast, also contributed to Barbados's rising volume of trade. From 1627 until 1700, 483 ships from Africa disembarked at least 105,178 African slaves in Barbados. In comparison,

[13] Nicholas Foster, *A Briefe Relation of the Late Horrid Rebellion Acted in the Island Barbadas* (London, 1650), 3; John Ogilby, *America* (London, 1671): 379-380.

during the seventeenth century, 45 slaving vessels left Africa for the Chesapeake where they disembarked 8,043 African slaves.[14]

Barbados, in short, emerged as a central market for seventeenth-century England's main colonial trades, with especial prominence in the intercolonial sugar and slave trade. Within this interconnected environment, a group of Barbadian adventurers arose to exploit commercial opportunities in new market frontiers. Spearheaded by elites including Sir Thomas Modyford, their ambitions stretched beyond Barbados's shores.

Commercial Geography and the Barbadian Adventurers: 1650s-1670s

During the second half of the seventeenth century, Barbados emerged as the gateway into the commercial geography of the intercolonial Atlantic world. English merchants obeyed the dictates of currents and winds, sailing in a clockwise circle around the Atlantic Ocean, and thriving ports emerged to take advantage of these navigable ocean routes. Barbados linked this commercial geography together due to its ideal location and market influence. For instance, the English sugar merchants who lifted anchor from London and Plymouth found a natural ally in the Canaries Current. This southward current hastened their vessels along the western coast of Europe and directed them towards the Madeira Islands. Once merchants concluded their business here, which often entailed purchasing the Madeiran wines that elites coveted, they turned their compasses southwestward towards the main sugar producer, Barbados. Alternatively, merchants engaged in the slave trade continued southward from the Madeira and Cape Verde Islands until they arrived in the gulf of West Africa. Their holds stocked with African slaves, these merchants

[14] Larry Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted: The English Colonization of Barbados, 1627-1660* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 108-110; Ligon, *True and Exact History*, 113; Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 210-211, 285-286; Steele, *English Atlantic*, 284; "Transatlantic Slave Trade – Database," SlaveVoyages, https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database.

again headed to Barbados, which demanded countless slave laborers to toil on its sugar plantations. The South Equatorial Current assisted these merchant vessels, pushing them into the Lesser Antilles.[15]

Once in Bridgetown, Barbados, commercial possibilities opened up for English merchants depending on the trades they pursued. One trade route flowed northward into the Sargasso Sea and North Atlantic Current and allowed vessels to return to England. This route illuminated the basic contour of the commercial geography: sugar and slave traders traveled between England, West Africa, and the Lesser Antilles. A second route guided merchants to other English colonial markets. Sugar and slave vessels sailed westward into the Greater Antilles and towards North America. When the English conquered Jamaica in 1655, its harbor at Port Royal became a popular destination for seafarers along this route. Merchants could then head northward through the Windward Passage to return to England, perhaps with a stop in Bermuda, or they could continue westward into the Gulf Stream. The Gulf Stream aided voyages along the eastern coast of North America, where markets in the Chesapeake and New England, and in the Carolina Lowcountry after 1670, awaited merchants. This second route captured the intercolonial leg of the trade: merchants that arrived at Barbados continued their voyages by sailing towards the Greater Antilles, North America, and eventually back to England. In fact, intercolonial trades converged in Barbados because its merchants and planters not only exported sugar and imported slaves but also relied on the importation provisions and raw materials. For instance, vessels that shoved off from New England ports traveled to Barbados without intermediary stops, although a small number used the Madeira Islands route. Thus, writes Steele, Barbados "was well placed to receive cargoes, news, and gossip" from the imperial core and colonial peripheries, and the

[15] Steele, *English Atlantic*, 8, 22-25.

merchants and planters of Bridgetown received news of European and colonial market conditions long before other places. Savvy Barbadians recognized that they sat in a privileged place in the emerging intercolonial commercial geography, and many used this advantage when they became commercial adventurers.[16]

Surinam, Jamaica, and Carolina fit nicely into this commercial geography because they sat near the navigable sugar and slave trade routes that ran through Barbados. Further, these frontiers offered new potential for the deployment of the resources and connections that elite Barbadians obtained during the sugar boom as well as new resources that Barbadian merchants and planters desired but which their island did not produce. Barbadians could reasonably expect that, should they develop markets in these frontiers and attract merchants to them, they would enlarge their fortunes. Likewise, the historians Alfred Chandler, Justin Roberts, and Ian Beamish have identified certain push factors that encouraged Barbadians to do exactly this. Chandler focuses on Barbados's surplus laborer population. Since Barbadian elites deprived freed servants the opportunity to become landowners themselves by claiming the best lands themselves, undeveloped regions across the Atlantic promised a productive avenue for the island's idle laborers. Additionally, Roberts and Beamish focus on the mentality espoused by elite Barbadians. The stunning success of the sugar boom equipped Barbadians with a capitalist and expansionist ethos in which growth begot growth: by reinvesting the profits earned from their sugar estates abroad, Barbadian fortunes would continually soar. Taken together, Barbados's embeddedness in intercolonial commerce, its ideal location near well-travelled maritime routes, its surplus laborer population, and its devotion to sugar cultivation created the environment in

[16] Steele, *English Atlantic*, 8, 22-28.

which the Barbadian adventurer class could seize the initiative on the new commercial opportunities opening up before them.[17]

Many of these Barbadian adventurers began their West Indian journey as disaffected ex-Royalists, merchant partners, and younger sons of the English gentry. Once in Barbados, they amassed sugar estates, exchanged credit with English merchants, and directed intercolonial trades. Sir Thomas Modyford, Sir John Colleton, and Sir John Yeamans received baronetcies between 1658 and 1665 for their valuable service to the English realm. Between 1650 and 1670, Modyford, Colleton, and Yeamans utilized their personal and commercial connections to engage in ventures across the Atlantic. Beginning in 1650, Sir Thomas Modyford and Francis Lord Willoughby directed Barbadians towards Surinam. Then during the late 1650s and 1660s, Modyford channeled his efforts into the development of Jamaica. Finally, from the 1660s to the early 1670s, Sir John Colleton, and after his death his son Sir Peter, and Sir John Yeamans became leading actors in the Carolina adventure. The Barbadian adventurers' principal concern did not involve the creation of permanent societies, even if they did contribute to this process in the long term by furthering the development of the plantation system. Instead, the adventurers sought commercial opportunities in undeveloped frontiers for their own and their kin's benefit. In the process, they also benefitted the English empire by acting as agents of colonization who enlarged the scope of its intercolonial commercial activities.[18]

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[17] Alfred D. Chandler, "The Expansion of Barbados," in *Chapters in Barbados History*, edited by Peter F. Campbell (St. Anne's Garrison, Barbados: Barbados Museum and Historical Society, 1986), 61-89; Roberts and Beamish, "Venturing Out," 49-72.

[18] Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 81. For the overall expansion of Barbados in the seventeenth century, see Roberts and Beamish, "Venturing Out;" Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 106-121; Jack P. Greene, "Colonial South Carolina and the Caribbean Connection;" Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 110-116; Chandler, "The Expansion of Barbados," 61-89.

Sir Thomas Modyford proved among the most influential of these Barbadian adventurers. After Richard Ligon returned to England in 1650, Modyford kept developing his sugar plantation and immersed himself in other ventures. For instance, Modyford and fellow adventurer Sir Peter Colleton served as Barbados's factors for the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading in Africa. A precursor to the Royal African Company, the Company of Royal Adventurers held a monopoly over English trade in West Africa through its 1660 charter, which included the slave trade from 1662 onward. The Company operated until the Second-Anglo Dutch War disrupted its trade and uncollected debts led to its collapse in 1672. Modyford, who also served as Speaker of the House of Assembly, likely influenced the decision by the Company's governor, the Duke of York, to provide at least 3,000 slaves annually to the West Indies. Nevertheless, prior to his role as agent of the Company of Royal Adventurers, Modyford spearheaded Barbadians' involvement in Surinam and Jamaica in the 1650s and 1660s.[19]

In 1651, Modyford assured the protectorate governing England that Surinam offered crucial resources that Barbados lacked. Whereas Barbados became increasingly devoted to sugar cultivation, Surinam offered abundant land from which to extract timber and upon which to grow other crops and raise livestock. In 1652, Modyford wrote to Protectorate officials that "in prudence a place must be thought upon where this great people shall find maintenance and employment." Should Barbadians develop Surinam, they would acquire a rich new market. In fact, Modyford did not view Barbados's idle labor population as a weakness that tarnished the reputation of his island: he viewed it as a resource that he and others could mobilize in productive ways. This dynamic suggests that historians ought to reassess their view of Barbadian

[19] George Frederick Zook, *The Company of Royal Adventurers Trading in Africa* (Cambridge: Press of the New Era Printing, 1919), 71-76.

society in the seventeenth century. Historian Richard Dunn points to Barbados's devotion to sugar cultivation, and the reliance on servant and slave labor and provisions and raw material imports that said devotion occasioned, as a sign of societal weakness, especially when compared to the social stability of colonies such as New England. Yet, Modyford treated this dynamic as a positive force that made him and other well-connected adventurers the ideal agents to sponsor new ventures beyond Barbados's shores.[20]

At the direction of Modyford and other adventurers, Barbadians flocked to Surinam, raising its estimated population of 600 persons in 1654 to around 1,000 in 1660 and 4,000 in 1663. Many Barbadians preferred to supply capital and provisions to the venture without leaving their estates through merchant partnerships. For instance, planters Jacob Debarles and Simon Grendinge set up a plantation in Surinam while their partner Peter Debarles ensured that provisions arrived, and they divided the profits into equal thirds. Surinam fit into the commercial geography centered in Barbados. Regarding the potential of a livestock trade in Surinam, Modyford again wrote to Protectorate officials in 1654 declaring that "the nearness of the colony to Barbados will be a good strengthening and countenance to each other." Francis Lord Willoughby, another prominent Barbadian adventurer and rival to Modyford, further championed the development of Surinam. After Modyford betrayed their shared royalist cause by helping the Protectorate reassert its authority over Barbados, in 1652, Willoughby left for Surinam. He proceeded to invest about £26,000 sterling into its development. Willoughby also invested in Lesser Antilles ventures on the islands of St. Lucia and St. Kitts during the 1650s and 1660s.[21]

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[20]Chandler, "The Expansion of Barbados," 61-63, 66; Roberts and Beamish, "Venturing Out," 49-51; Thomas Modyford (1652) quoted in Roberts and Beamish, "Venturing Out," 51. For the characterization of Barbados's social and economic structure as a disadvantage, see Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*.

[21] Chandler, "The Expansion of Barbados," 75-76; Roberts and Beamish, "Venturing Out," 52-55; Thomas Modyford (1654) quoted in Roberts and Beamish, 52; Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 111.

By the 1660s Surinam housed a number of commercial activities. George Warren, who traveled to the frontier during the decades of Barbadian settlement and published *Impartial Description of Surinam* in 1667, documented the major trades of the venture. The plantations numbered "in all about five hundred, whereof Forty or Fifty have Sugar-works, yielding no small profit to the Owners." Aside from sugar, the plantation estates generated "Speckle-wood, Cotton, Tobacco, Indico, Gums, and Dye-wood" and "Indian-Corn." Warren frequently compared the quality of Surinam's crops with those of Barbados, testifying to the relationship forged between the two markets, and he gestured at the importance of intercolonial trades, with which Barbadians had knowledge and experience. Despite the presence of cattle, fish, and hogs in the natural environment and on planter's estates, Warren wrote that "of Flesh and Fish they receive Constant Supplies from New England, Virginia, and other places." Regarding laborers, in addition to those the Barbadian adventurers brought with them, planters in Surinam purchased slaves from "Guiny in Africa to those parts." They also bought women and children who the natives in the region captured and sold "for Trifles to the English," and they exported many of these native slaves to Barbados, including Arawaks allies of the Dutch during the Second Anglo-Dutch War. Ultimately, the English frontier of Surinam collapsed due to an accident and outside forces. The Barbadian adventurer, Francis Lord Willoughby drowned in a hurricane in 1666, and England ceded Surinam to the Dutch as a concession in the 1667 Treaty of Breda.[22]

Thomas Modyford devoted considerable energies to the development of Surinam, but he engaged too with the budding adventure of Jamaica, and there his influence proved enduring. By 1654, England's Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell and leading officials put into motion a secret

[22] Justin Roberts, "Surrendering Surinam: The Barbadian Diaspora and the Expansion of the English Sugar Frontier, 1650-1675," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 73, no. 2 (2016): 232-240; George Warren, *Impartial Description of Surinam Upon the Continent of Guiana* (London, 1670), 16, 18, 8, 19, 26; Carolyn Arena, "Indian Slaves from Guiana in Seventeenth-Century Barbados," *Ethnohistory* 64, no. 1 (2017): 65-90, 81-82.

and daring enterprise: an amphibious invasion of the Spanish Americas. After amassing a large naval fleet and infantry force, and appointing Admiral William Penn and General Robert Venables as its military leaders, Cromwell desired a launching point in the West Indies. A populated colony resting at the southeastern entrance to the West Indies, and with key information about Spanish whereabouts thanks to its merchant community, Barbados served this purpose. Modyford communicated with Protectorate officials during this stage of the invasion, assuring them in 1654 that they could "count on 4,000 men from Barbados and 2,000 from the Leeward Islands." When the fleet arrived in Barbados in January of 1655, its leaders encountered a Barbadian elite hesitant to assist, if not outright hostile towards them. However, Modyford and the governor Daniel Searle proved willing allies, and they helped recruit 3,000 men and exchanged information with Penn and Venables regarding the ideal first target. The "Western Design" aimed its sights at Hispaniola.[23]

The invasion of Hispaniola failed. Licking their wounds, and with reduced numbers, the fleet instead invaded and took Spanish Jamaica. Jamaica remained under military occupation between 1655 and 1662. With soldiers fighting against waves of resistant Spaniards and former Spanish slaves, plantation settlement in Jamaica lagged during this era. To encourage the development of Jamaica after the soldiers withdrew, Crown officials appointed Sir Thomas Modyford as its governor, an office which he held between 1664 and 1671. Modyford drew on his commercial connections and personal influence. According to James Knight, who completed his two volume history of Jamaica in 1747, "the increase of Settlements was principally owing to the Example of S[i]r Thomas Modiford . . . He not only put People upon Industry and Planting

[23] Modyford quoted in Chandler, "The Expansion of Barbados," 67; Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 154-155; Carla Pestana, *The English Conquest of Jamaica: Oliver Cromwell's Bid for Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 43-55, 65.

and was of Service to the Young Planters by His Instructions but promoted and Encouraged Trade." Indeed, Modyford brought with him at least 900 poorer Barbadians when he relocated to Jamaica, and his brother Sir James arranged, with the permission of the restored Charles II, to have felons transported to the island between 1664 and 1669. During his term Modyford also attracted investments from London merchants, including Martin Noell who invested in Barbados during the 1640s sugar boom, and oversaw the importation of slaves through the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading in Africa until 1666. Indeed, Modyford issued 1,800 land patents under a headright system, amounting to 300,000 acres land, to encourage Barbadians to bring family members, servants, and slaves with them. Modyford's family in Barbados took full advantage of his office: his sons Thomas and Charles patented 9,042 and 6,330 acres, respectively, and his brother Sir James patented 5,846 acres in Jamaica. By 1673, two years after Modyford's governorship ended, 7,768 migrants peopled Jamaica alongside 9,504 African slaves.[24]

Jamaica relied on a combination of diversified trades and illegal activity throughout the seventeenth century. Jamaica sat amidst a bustling commercial geography near navigable trade routes. Older intercolonial links with Surinam strengthened the Jamaica venture. James Knight claimed that "1200 [English]men, Women, and Children, including Negroes" relocated to Jamaica in 1676, where they "Succeeded much better than any of the other Colonies that removed to the Island, except some few of the Barbadians." Connections forged by Barbadian elites assisted the Jamaicans' trades in cotton, dyewoods, indigo, sugar, slaves, and tobacco. Additionally, privateering against and contraband trading with the Spanish further bolstered

[24] Pestana, *The English Conquest of Jamaica*, 228-229, 238-239, 245; James Knight, *The Natural, Moral, and Political History of Jamaica*, edited by Jack Greene (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2021), 106-107; Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 154-156; Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 52-53.

Jamaica's economy. In fact, Jamaica's Port Royal grew quickly during the latter half of the seventeenth century in contrast to the slower development of sugar, indigo, and cotton plantations. Modyford himself commissioned its maritime community to raid Dutch and French ships during the Second Anglo-Dutch War of 1665-1667. Further, Modyford issued a letter of marque to the privateer Henry Morgan, who according to James Knight, had previously "engaged Himself to a Planter of Barbadoes, whom He served four Years" before arriving in Jamaica shortly after the "Western Design" landed. Modyford authorized Morgan's famous raids against the Spanish at Granada in Nicaragua, Porto Bello in Panama, and Maracaibo in Venezuela between 1665 and 1671. The merchants of Port Royal also illicitly resold to Spanish ships slaves purchased from the Company of Royal Adventurers, and later the Royal African Company. Eventually, Modyford's penchant for exploiting available commercial opportunities caught up with him. He spent two years in the Tower of London after being recalled as governor in 1671, but evidently his personal influence remained strong, for he returned to his Jamaican estate before dying in 1679.[25]

Yet, the era of the Barbadian adventurers did not end with Surinam and Jamaica. Barbadians turned to yet another adventure during the late-1660s and 1670s, and this time Sir John Colleton and Sir John Yeamans assumed the lead, their eyes set on distant Carolina.

Barbadian Organizers and Carolinian Traders, 1670s-1690s

Sir John Colleton, who in 1663 organized the eight Lord Proprietors of Carolina, relied on the connections forged between Barbados, England, and other colonies to initiate the Carolina

[25] Knight, *History of Jamaica*, 131-132 112; Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 156-159; Chandler, "Expansion of Barbados," 74-75; Pestana, *The English Conquest of Jamaica*, 244-247; Nuala Zahedieh, "Trade, Plunder, and Economic Development in Early English Jamaica, 1655-89," *Economic History Review* 39, no. 2 (1986): 205-222; 207, 215-218.

adventure. In 1663, Thomas Modyford and Peter Colleton, Sir John's eldest son, wrote to the proprietors regarding the recent expedition of the "Corporation of the Barbadoes Adventures" in Florida and Carolina. Modyford and Colleton requested that the proprietors grant a charter which "appoint[ed] and nominate[d] as Prime Adventurers and undertakers of the before mentioned Corporation." The proprietors took up the request and offered enticing concessions to the "Adventurers of the Island of Barbados and their Associates of England, New England, the Caribbia Islands and Barmothos." The proprietors assured Modyford and Colleton that Carolina would "not injure nor overthrow the other plantations" because adventurers would grow currants, wine, rice, silk, and other desirable goods not produced in Barbados. The proprietors also placed Barbadians at the helm of the venture. Sir John Colleton suggested that his friend, the seasoned planter Sir John Yeamans, lead the Barbadian adventurers on the basis of his character and integrity. On 11 January 1664, the proprietors appointed Sir John Yeamans governor. Recognizing that many Barbadians had surplus servant and slave populations, the proprietors further incentivized the venture by creating a headright system of 30 to 70 acres of land for every servant or slave that the Barbadians brought with them.[26]

An estimated 150 Barbadian adventurers arrived at Cape Feare, Carolina with Sir John Yeamans in November 1666. Unfortunately for them, Sir John Yeamans and other adventurers found Cape Feare disappointing and hardly worth their time and capital, and by 1667 it lay abandoned. The Barbadian adventurers explained to the proprietors in a 1666 letter that

[26] Thomas Modyford and Peter Colleton, "Proposealls of Severall Gentlemen of Barbadoes," 12 August 1663, in *The Shaftesbury Papers and Other Records Relating to Carolina and the First Settlement on Ashley River Prior to the Year 1676*, edited by Langdon Cheves, (Collections of the South Carolina Historical Society, Volume Five, 1897; Reprint, Charleston: Home House Press, 2010), 10-13; "Barbadoes Concessions," 1664/5, in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 33, 41-43; "Letter to Col. Tho. Modyford and Peter Colleton Esqr," 30 August 1663, in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 13-15; "Lords Proprietors to Sr John Yeamans," 11 January 1664, in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 50-51; Wood, *Black Majority*, 13-17.

regulations hampered commercial activities. The Barbadians loathed the proprietors' quit-rent system and their request that all land be divided into eleven lots and that they keep one man on every hundred acres. The proprietors' intended through these provisions to create a balanced and stable society, but the Barbadians recognized that one-hundred acre plots of swampy land, for which one had to pay rents, ran counter to their commercial expectations for initiating risky ventures by linking new frontiers to established West Indian markets. In fact, Sir John Yeamans left Cape Feare before the letter was sent, citing the "greviousness and unpracticableness of these three injunctions." Yeamans promised the adventurers who remained that, once he arrived at his estate in Barbados, "though hee labored not openly with us hee would yet labor more effectually for us." Yeamans intended to pull on his personal connections to see the regulations removed. Evidently, Yeamans kept himself busy because, by 1669, he engaged not only with the renewed Carolina adventure but also received a commission for the settling of Saint Kitts. Nonetheless, his decision to return to Barbados foreshadowed an important feature of early Carolinian commerce: many Barbadian adventurers could successfully organize Carolina's trades from a distance.[27]

As it had for Jamaica during the "Western Design," Barbados served as a gateway for the Carolina adventure during the renewed expedition of 1669. The proprietors, especially Sir Peter Colleton, who assumed his father Sir John's role after his death in 1666, recognized that Barbados provided an ideal point of departure for those venturing to Carolina. Adventurers from England boarded the inaugural fleet to Carolina, comprised of the *Carolina,* the *Albemarle,* and the *Port Royal*. The *Carolina* and *Port Royal* drifted into Carlisle Bay in late October of 1669,

[27] "The Clarendon Address," 1666, in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 84-88. For the full list of regulations laid out by the proprietors see "Barbadoes Concessions," 1665, in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 46-49. W. Noel Sainsbury, ed., *Calendar of State Papers: Colonial Series: America and the West Indies*, 1669-1674 (London: Printed for Her Majesty's Stationary Office, By Erie and Spottiswoode, 1889), 12-13.

while the damaged *Albemarle* arrived in Barbados three days later. The ships anchored at Bridgetown until November, and during this period the adventurers gathered supplies, familiarized themselves with the terms laid out by the Proprietors, and discussed the commercial opportunities awaiting them. Expecting to circulate commodities, the adventurers stocked the *Carolina*, *Albemarle*, and *Port Royal* with goods to trade to the native groups in Carolina. They certainly anticipated hostilities, loading firelock muskets, swords, barrels of powder and other weapons on the fleet, but they also expressly secured glass beads, hatchets, hoes, adzes and other commodities for native trade. The proprietors desired peace with natives and felt that stable trading relations would accomplish this end. Of course, none of these preparations would matter unless the Barbadian adventurers secured more migrants for Carolina.[28]

Sir John Yeamans, Thomas Colleton, John Strode, and Major Nathanial Kingsland proved well suited to organizing a party of adventurers. In November 1669, the proprietors advised their agent Joseph West to gather "Cotton seed, Indigo Seed, Ginger Roots … some Canes planted for a tryall" The proprietors assured West that the goods "will be procured you by Mr. Thomas Colleton," the younger brother of the proprietor Sir Peter, "if you applye yorselfe to him." In addition to providing crop seeds, West mentioned that Thomas Colleton and Sir John Yeamans arranged the purchase of the sloop *Three Brothers* as well as "another vessell that will cary downe 60 or 70 people" after the condition of the battered *Albemarle* worsened. Twelve months later on 4 November 1670, when the fledging frontier of Carolina demanded still more migrants, the proprietors issued the "Barbadoes Proclamation" to aspiring adventurers. All interested persons, they wrote, should journey "to the house of Mr. John Strode Marchant at St. Michaels towne" in Barbados, "where they shall finde Capt. Henry Braine to have their

[28] "The Carolina Fleet," 1669, in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 137-152.

agreements confirmed." John Strode worked in partnership with Thomas Colleton. The "Barbadoes Proclamation" of 1670 also entrusted Sir John Yeamans, Thomas Colleton, and Major Nathanial Kingsland to "advertise all such persons that are minded to tranceport themselves" to Carolina. Sir John Yeamans had recently returned from a voyage between Barbados, Carolina, and Bermuda. He wrote on 15 November 1670 that "I intend to sayle thither [Carolina] myself towards the latter end of summer . . . And for the present I shall endeavor the speedy dispatch . . . with what passengers I cann encourage to that Designe."[29]

Those who resided in Carolina recognized the colonial engagement of the Barbadian adventurers. In a letter 1670 to proprietor Lord Ashley, Henry Brayne wrote that "Mr. Colliton and Mr Stroud the marchant doth take abundant paines and they have taken up one hundred pounds sterling fur the furnishing of our ship" and that Strode "provided almost 20 servant betwixt himself and one Justive Harvie." Indeed, Thomas Colleton and John Strode continually sent provisions and migrants on the *John and Thomas*. Strode himself traveled between Carolina and Barbados and acquired a reputation as a hospitable and trustworthy merchant. On 23 November 1670, Thomas Colleton wrote to his brother Sir Peter that the "Proprietors are much obliged to Mr. Jno. Strode for if they had appointed him their Agent hear he could not have done more." Strode had "gotten more peoples Harttes than you can immaggen" because the residents of Carolina treated Strode as if he were "one of the Proprietors or their cheefe agent" and "apply themselves to him for advize eat with him and make use of his house as if belong'd to the Proprietors." In fact, Thomas Colleton requested that Sir Peter and the other proprietors thank Strode. Strode navigated the commercial geography of the Atlantic world, and his "interest in

[29] "Coppy of Instructions for Mr. West about or Plantacon," in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 125-127; "Joseph West to Lord Ashley Cooper," 8 November 1669, in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 156-157; "Instructions for Mr. Henry Brayne," in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 129-130; "Barbadoes Proclamation," 4 November 1670, in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 210-213; "Sir John Yeamans to Lords Proprietors," 15 November 1670, in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 217-220.

New England will bring a great many [migrants] from thence." The following February, he and Strode arrived at Charles Town on the *John and Thomas* with an additional forty settlers.[30]

Without Sir John Yeamans, Thomas Colleton, John Strode, and Major Nathanial Kingsland, Carolina would have little attracted commercial attention. These adventurers, often acting from Barbados's shores, channeled their knowledge of commercial geography into the market frontier of Carolina. On 20 November 1670 Captain Brayne discussed with Peter Colleton the trade in "Timber for Barbados" and commodities "fitt for nue yourk" and advised him that regarding "the madgagment and contrivences of all things of this nature I hoope your Honour will give power unto Mr. Thos: Colliton and Mr Stroud Sir John Yamons Major Kingsland with my selfe." The following year, on 1 May 1671, the proprietors issued detailed instructions to Captain Halsted regarding how to navigate the various markets of the Atlantic world with the assistance of the Barbadian adventurers. The proprietors directed Halsted "to procure a loading of timber, pipe staves & other Commoditys to ye Ship Blessing, fit for ye Market of Barbados." Once at Bridgetown, Halsted should either sell the goods for "ready money" or "consult with Mr Jno Strode, & take all other ways you can informe yourselfe." "If you have trade at Berbados," they continued, "consult with Sir Jno Yeamans & Mr Tho: Colleton . . . to get a quicke fraught of Passengers for Ashley River . . . &c in Rum and Sugar and other goods fit to make a Cargo for ye trade of Virginia." Halsted should then return to Carolina, stock

[30] "Henry Brayne to Lord Ashley," 9 November 1670, in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 214-217; "T. Colleton to Governor and Council," 26 Xber 1670, in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 255-256; "Thos. Colleton to Sir P. Colleton," 23 November 1670, in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 240-245; "Jo: West to Lord Ashley," 2 March 1670/71, in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 266-268.

his ship with "another Cargo of Timber" for Barbados, and while in Barbados again, "to invest in a Cargo fit for ye Bahamas."[31]

Halsted's instructions illuminated the commercial geography centered around Barbados. Ideally, ships from Carolina would unload their timber in Barbados, where they would purchase sugar and rum, then travel to the Bahamas, Virginia, and New England to trade and recruit settlers before returning to Carolina. Indeed, early Carolina's economy – like early Surinam's and Jamaica's before it - supported a mixture of commercial activities that yielded quick returns while the plantation system developed gradually. Carolinians exchanged with natives for deerskin pelts and Indian slaves and on their burgeoning plantations they felled timber, raised cattle, and grew food crops while also experimenting with seeds that could become cash-crops in the long term. West Indian colonies routinely demanded provisions, barrel staves, and enslaved laborers, and merchants ferried these from Carolina to Barbados to obtain capital and recruit settlers. Through Barbados's market demands, and because of its active adventurer community, commercial opportunities existed in Carolina.[32]

How, then, did Carolinian residents exploit the market connections that the Barbadian adventurers established? Sir John Yeamans eventually moved to Carolina in mid-1671 to reclaim his governorship, and when he did, the current governor Joseph West complained in July that "Sir J. Yeamans setting up a Barbados Party." Others echoed this fact, such as John Godfrey who wrote that "Sir John Yeamans, Owen Gray Mathews and O Syllivan are the contrary party to Governor West." The phrase "Barbados Party" has long puzzled historians. Although Sir John

[31] "Capt. Brayne to Sir P. Colleton," 20 November 1670, in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 232-237; "Captain Halsted Instructions," 1 May 1671, in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 318-322.
[32] Allan Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 44, 48-49.

Yeamans and his agent Thomas Gray were Barbadians, Maurice Mathews, William Owen, and Florence O'Sullivan came from England. However, one thing united this "Barbados Party:" all engaged in commercial activities that provided commodities for sale in Barbados and other West Indian colonies during the early 1670s, at which point commercial organizers like Thomas Colleton and John Strode handled the rest. With plots of land in Charles Town - the mercantile center - and plantation estates along the Ashley and Wando River, the "Barbados Party" effectively gathered timber, cultivated various crops, and traded for native deerskins and slaves. Ideally, when ships docked near the Ashley River ready for commerce, members of the "Barbados Party" ferried the timber and native goods from their estates to the port of Charles Town.[33]

During Yeamans's term as governor of Carolina from August 1671 until August 1674, the "Barbados Party" organized Carolina's trades, surveyed lands, traded with and waged war against natives, and sold native deerskins and slaves abroad. A few events in 1671 illustrate how these settlers acquired salable commodities. When reports abounded regarding disturbances caused by "the Kussoe and other Southward Indians" in September of 1671, Yeamans and the Grand Council ordered that Godfrey and Gray rally the settlers to prepare for war. Evidently, Godfrey, Gray, and others enslaved defeated Kussoe because the Council ordered on 2 October 1671 that "every Company which went out upon that expedition shall secure and maintaine the Indians they have taken till they can transport the said Indians." Later that October, and again in January, the Council assigned Godfrey, Gray, and Mathews to survey lands along the Ashley and

[33] "Locke's Carolina Memoranda: J. West to Lord Ashley," July 1671, in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 349; "Locke's Carolina Memoranda: Godfrey to Sir P. C.," 20 August 1671, in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 350; Roper, *Conceiving Carolina*, 45; Sirman, *Colonial South Carolina*, 27, 41; *Records of the Secretary of the Province and Register of the Province of South Carolina, 1671-1675*, edited by A. S. Salley (Columbia: Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1944), 14, 27.

Wando River where they encountered native groups with whom they could trade. For instance, on 23 February 1672, Gray partnered with another Barbadian John Foster to export five tanned deerskins, ten untanned deerskins, and five bear skins in addition to various goods including barrels of beef, firearms, hogs, and servants.[34]

Between 1671 and 1674, Sir John Yeamans and his Council authorized Maurice Mathews and others to war against the Kussoe, the Westo, and the Stono. The spoils of these wars further generated commodities for trade, and so did the peace accords. Yeamans' Council exacted tribute from defeated natives and encouraged allied natives to war against their rivals and enslave them upon victory. For example, after war tensions with the Kussoe cooled by 1674, the Council ordered that the Kussoe "pay a deer skin monthly as an acknowledgment or else to lose our amity." These commodities helped fill the merchant ships that anchored off Charles Town. After Sir John Yeamans died in August 1674, Maurice Mathews of the "Barbados Party" became the leading promoter of this exploitative native and maritime trade system. Between 1675 to 1680, the Westo received encouragement by Council officials to raid and capture rival Cherokee, Chickasaw, Chisaca, Coweta, and Cuseeta. Mathews and others purchased these native slaves and sold them to Barbados and the West Indies. In fact, as a testament to the scale of the native slave trade, historian Allan Gallay estimates that more native slaves were exported through Charles Town than the African slaves imported into Charles Town in the period before 1715. Although only scattered evidence survives of these merchant voyages, such as the vessel *St. Christopher* which ferried cedar, corn, tar, and thirteen native slaves from Carolina to Barbados

[34] "The Council Journals," 27 September 1671, in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 341-342; "The Council Journals," 2 October 1671, in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 344-355; 24 October 1671, in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 345-346; "The Council Journals," 13 January 1671, in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 374-375; *Records of the Secretary … of South Carolina, 1671-1675*, 25-26.

in 1682, the intercolonial links forged between Charles Town and Bridgetown suggest that Barbados served as the greatest market for these slaves, with Jamaica as the second largest.[35]

Due to the early efforts of the Barbadian adventurers and the native traders of the "Barbados Party" throughout the 1670s, the commercial geography which linked Bridgetown, Barbados to Charles Town, Carolina now extended to the native groups residing in the North America interior. When Mathews described the situation in Carolina on 18 May 1680, he celebrated the growth of Charles Town and noted that ships from the West Indies frequently exchanged goods there. Charles Town, wrote Mathews, "is so convenient for public Commerce that it rather seems to be the design of some skillful Artist than the accidental position of nature." Positioned on the tip of the peninsula formed by the Ashley and Cooper Rivers, Charles Town provided safe entry for merchant vessels. Mathews stated that "Wee have a dayly correspondence from the Barbadoes and wee frequently hear from Northern Barmudas, Jamaica, and these ships which doe trade to the bay of Camplecha doe oft call here for provision." Much like Bridgetown in Barbados decades before, Charles Town in Carolina steadily attracted merchant vessels, and residents of Carolina desired their own estates within close proximity to it. Following the Cooper River from Charles Town towards the interior, Mathew described the "first considerable passage we have to the land from this river is the Goosecreek . . . about 15 miles from Town. It conveyes planters in the Land about Ten miles, And from the head of it to Charlstoune the people are settled contiguously."[36]

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[35] Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 51-56, 299-301; Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina*, 40-43; Converse Clowse, *Economic Beginnings in Colonial South Carolina 1670-1730* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1971), 64-66. As Gallay mentions, merchant records for native slaves arriving in Barbados are sparse because shipping returns typically listed outbound, not inbound, goods before 1718.

[36] Maurice Mathews, "A Contemporary View of Carolina in 1680," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 55, no. 3 (1954): 153, 159, 154-155.

Goose Creek became the seat of Carolina's most ambitious and avid traders in native deerskins and slaves. Many of the merchants and planters of Goose Creek held considerable political influence on the Grand Council and earned the infamous name of the "Goose Creek men" for their aggressive pursuit of trade with natives and even pirates. Maurice Mathews served as the principal leader of the "Goose Creek men" from the 1680s until his death in 1694. Arthur Middleton and James Moore also emerged as leaders of the "Goose Creek men." Arthur Middleton, son of Barbadian elites who prospered during the 1640s-1660s sugar boom, served as a merchant and slave trader in Barbados and later moved to Carolina in 1679. James Moore arrived in Carolina in 1674, and after spending his first few years working for Lady Margaret Yeamans, the widow of the late Sir John Yeamans, he became a member of the Council from 1677 to 1683 and the governor in 1699. Other prominent "Goose Creek men" include Robert Gibbes, son of an elite Barbadian family, and Bernard Schenkingh, a merchant of Barbados. Unsurprisingly, Mathews, Middleton, Moore and other "Goose Creek men" who had connections with Barbados engaged in the native trade and so helped the frontier of Carolina integrate into the Atlantic's commercial geography. Indeed, John Strode, the Barbadian adventurer who worked with Thomas Colleton in the 1670s, purchased 500 acres in Goose Creek between 1696 and 1697.[37]

The "Goose Creek men," like the "Barbados Party" before them, aggressively pursued trade with natives, both establishing trading relations and waging war, to the chagrin of the proprietors. The proprietors readily exploited commercial opportunities themselves, yet they expressed dismay at the scale of destruction wars with natives occasioned. Reminiscent of the

[37] Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina*, 29-34; Campbell, *Some Early Barbadian History*, 151-152; Bull, "Barbadian Settlers in Early Carolina," 333-336; Cheves, *Shaftesbury Papers*, 463.

contested visions between Yeamans and the proprietors that plagued Cape Feare, the proprietors desired a stable and self-sustaining settlement. In contrast, Mathews and the "Goose Creek men" treated the natives as commercial opportunities worth exploiting. The proprietors established their own trading monopoly with the Westo to disincentivize independent native traders. However, after aggressive Carolinians nearly exterminated the Westo in another war from 1679 to 1680, the trading network collapse and rendered moot the proprietary monopoly. In its wake, Mathews and others arranged for the Savannah to capture and sell other natives as slaves. The proprietors again attempted to rein in the "dealers in Indians." They ordered the governor on 13 March 1685 that "you doe not appoint mr. Maurice Mathews mr. James More or mr. Arthur Middleton who Wee have removed from being so for disobeying our orders in sending away the Indians." Yet, Mathews and Moore soon returned to their seats on the Council by the summer of 1685, and others who opposed the proprietary monopoly continued to trade with natives and circulate commodities towards Barbados and other intercolonial markets.[38]

Goose Creek has long inhabited a mythological space in early Carolinian history – a stronghold of Barbadian influence with few actual Barbadians living in it, and a continual threat to proprietary authority. For instance, many historians including Eugene Sirmans and Robert Weir characterize the "Goose Creek men" as a violent group of anti-proprietary political actors who frustrated the proprietor's attempts to create a stable society in pursuit of the little more than their own enrichment and the advancement of their political careers. The "Goose Creek men" did employ violence against natives, and they did worsen Carolina's relationship with native groups to the extent that the Yamasee War of 1715-1717 led to the permanent end of the native slave

[38] "Proprietors to Governor Joseph West," 13 March 1684/5, in *Records in the British Public Records Office Relating to South Carolina, 1663-1710*, Vol. 2, edited by William Noel Sainsbury and A. S. Salley (Columbia: Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1928): 27-30; Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 57-60, 66-68.

trade. However, the "Goose Creek men" engaged in these activities because Barbadians helped erect an intercolonial commercial system that possessed its own internal logic. Commodities attracted merchants, and merchants helped transform market frontiers into bustling ports in the Atlantic's commercial geography. In other words, the "Goose Creek men," much like the Barbadian adventurers, did not prioritize the creation of stable societies: they exploited commercial opportunities regardless of the human toll. Their devotion to intercolonial commerce, the same devotion that spurred the growth of Barbados, Surinam, and Jamaica, belonged to the same category of behavior that the Barbadian adventurers exhibited when they spearheaded the growth of England's Atlantic empire in the mid-to-late seventeenth century.[39]

Barbados and the Atlantic's Commercial Geography

London, England served as the imperial core for the colonial Atlantic trades, but Bridgetown, Barbados played a similar role, and it did so from within the colonial periphery. When contemporaries referred to Barbados as "Little England," they did more than compare the rolling hills of England to those of Barbados. For the merchants and mariners earning their living at seaside ports, the name of Barbados invoked an ambitious, entrepreneurial, and exploitative class who acquired levels of success unparalleled outside of England. The Barbadian elites that emerged during the 1640s, 1650s, and 1660s sugar boom did so by forging connections, both personal and commercial, with persons including London merchants, colonial officials, and leaders of England's Protectorate and restored House of Stuart. Barbados became a common

[39] For the basis for characterization of the "Goose Creek men" as a troublesome political faction, see Sirmans's *Colonial South Carolina: A Political History*, Weir's *Colonial South Carolina: A History*, and Clowse's *Economic Beginnings*. Roberts and Beamish provide a different characterization in "Venturing Out," in which the "Goose Creek men" shared the same mentality for autonomy and expansion that the Barbadians exhibited. While I agree with their characterization, they still prioritize the political role of the "Goose Creek men" more than their role as economic agents of colonization.

destination for vessels venturing out from Africa, England, North America, South America, and the West Indies. When the boom era of Barbadian history settled down by the 1660s and 1670s, elites including Sir Thomas Modyford and Francis Lord Willoughby turned adventurer. The Barbadian adventurers embodied a different category of the agents of colonization: they pursued economic opportunities across the waves within a commercial geography of their own making.

Historians have long recognized that Barbados became England's most lucrative colony in the seventeenth century. Barbados's influence on other colonies has also received due attention, including assessments of the rise of sugar cultivation in the West Indies, the embrace of African chattel slavery and formation of the integrated plantation model, and the spread of Barbadian servant and slave codes to Jamaica and Carolina. However, by treating Barbados as a central market on the Atlantic's commercial geography and a gateway to various ventures, the role of Barbadian adventurers as agents of colonization becomes clearer. Well-connected adventurers spurred intercolonial commerce and organized the trades of Surinam, Jamaica, Carolina and other locales. All English colonies, terrestrial and maritime alike, benefitted from a commercial geography that allowed them to import other's goods and export their own resources. Furthermore, commercial organizers like Sir John Yeamans, Thomas Colleton, and John Strode reveal how the commercial geography centered in Bridgetown influenced colonies with and without Barbadian migration. Barbadian adventurers sailed to Surinam and Jamaica, but their lasting impact on Carolina involved the formation of intercolonial trade networks.

England's colonial Atlantic world developed through repeated migration and the flow of commodities across its ocean. The ambitious and exploitative Barbadian adventures stood among the most successful of this group; but countless souls traversed this fluctuating space and made a living on the tossing seas.

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