

“Hereticks for Believing the Antipodes”: Scottish Colonial Identities in the Darien, 1698-1700

by

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B.A., Cape Breton University, 2005

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Abstract

New Caledonia (1698-1700) was Scotland's largest independent colonial venture. The scheme's collapse crippled the country financially and was an important factor in the Anglo-Scottish Union of 1707. This project explores the identity of Scottish settlers who attempted to colonize the Darien region of modern Panama. Colonial identity is assessed by reconstructing the Scottish dialogue about the natural world, the aboriginal population, and the commonwealth. I contend that the ideology of improvement that shaped Scottish perceptions of utility and fertility in the Darien became a powerful moral discourse used to critique the colonists. This paper also chronicles Scottish aspirations to found an empire of trade and civility, uncovering the fundamental problems created by the idealization of the Tule as eager subjects of this new empire. Finally, I argue that Caledonia's food shortages not only threatened the colonial government's legitimacy, they also exposed divergent ideals of the commonwealth among the settlers.

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Dedication

For Maman and Emily.

Epigraph

On First Looking into Chapman's Homer

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

John Keats, 1816

Introduction

Of all the ten thousand bubbles of which history has preserved the memory, none was ever more skilfully puffed into existence; none ever soared higher, or glittered more brilliantly; and none ever burst with a more lamentable explosion [than the Darien scheme].

Thomas Macaulay, 1861

John Hamilton, the second Lord Belhaven, was not a man to mince words. He was well known in Scotland for his direct manner and fiery disposition.¹ But this man of undisciplined temper was no maverick. He was deeply committed to rescuing Scotland from the widespread poverty that afflicted the nation during the late 1690s. Like many of his contemporaries, Belhaven passionately believed that Scottish fortunes could only be improved through trade and colonial plantations. To achieve this end, in 1695 he helped to found the Company of Scotland and became a leading advocate of the short-lived Scottish settlement of New Caledonia established in 1698.² The ambitious settlement in the Darien region of Panama was designed to transform Scotland into an imperial power by giving it a colonial port enviably located in relation to the Pacific Ocean, the rich continent of South America, and the growing trade of the West Indies. When the first fleet left Scotland on 14 July, 1698, Belhaven, like most Scots, could not suspect the degree to which failure would dog the steps of the settlers.

¹ Among his more notorious exploits, Belhaven served a short term in Edinburgh Castle after arguing that the controversial Test Act (1681) designed to secure the Protestant religion was riddled with loopholes that might allow a Catholic king to come to the throne. In 1703, during heated debates about the accession of Queen Anne, Belhaven and another MP came to blows and had to be pardoned by an Act of Parliament. John R. Young, "Hamilton, John, second Lord Belhaven and Stenton (1656–1708)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004).

² As the President of the Scottish Committee of Trade, Belhaven helped to draft the 1695 Act establishing the Company of Scotland trading to Africa and the Indies. Shortly thereafter, he joined the Company as one of its Directors and pledged to give £1000 to the Darien venture. Young, "Hamilton, John, second Lord Belhaven and Stenton (1656–1708)."

Between 1698 and 1700, two attempts to settle the Darien killed over 2000 Scots, destroyed ten ships and left an impoverished nation devastated. Many Scots resigned their imperial aspirations to failure and for a time the word Darien passed over men's lips like a deadly curse. Scottish men and women muttered that New Caledonia might have worked if only the English—whom they believed to be zealous to see the Scots enslaved and impoverished forever—had not undercut the Scottish endeavour at every available opportunity. In 1701, the Lord Belhaven reproached the “Inhumanity and Barbarity” of English laws blocking trade to the nascent Scottish colony and denying succour to dying Scottish settlers. “Their wicked Designs over-run us, even to the New World,” charged an indignant Belhaven before the Parliament, “as if, of all the World, *Scotland* and *Scots-Men* were to be esteemed the only Hereticks, for believing the *Antipodes*.”³

Historical writing about New Caledonia, more commonly known as the Darien Scheme, has consistently portrayed the collapse of the colony as inevitable. The disaster was the only colonial venture treated by Thomas Macaulay in his influential history of England. He railed against the Directors of the Company of Scotland for their “childish reliance on the words of an enthusiastic projector.”⁴ More recently, the Scottish political historian P.W.J. Riley dismisses the venture as a scheme promoted by venal Scottish magnates looking to serve their immediate political interests; it was a “half-baked enterprise...[that] looked remarkably like the opposition going into business.”⁵ Eminent Scottish historian T.C. Smout notes with some sympathy that, “The Scots possessed only

³ Lord Belhaven, *A Speech in Parliament On the 10th Day of January 1701*, EEBO (Edinburgh, 1701), 9.

⁴ Thomas Macaulay, *The History of England From the Accession of James the Second: Volume V* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861), 228.

⁵ P.W.J.Riley, *King William and the Scottish Politicians* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1979), 132, 137.

courage: everything else, including knowledge of their own limitations, was sadly lacking.”⁶ In a summary of historical opinion on the topic up to the late 1970s, William Ferguson concludes that the venture has been unfairly written off as a “piece of sublime lunacy.”⁷

Previous historians have been so caught up with the “heresy” of the Scots’ overseas plantation that they have largely neglected the study of Scottish activities *in* the Darien. Yet, the writings of New Caledonia’s settlers are an unrivalled source for insight into seventeenth-century Scottish identity both at home and abroad. When I began my research, I was surprised to discover that George Insh’s *The Company of Scotland* (1932) remains the authoritative history of the New Caledonia.⁸ Insh’s work, though an invaluable politico-economic history of the colony, marginalizes the daily life and culture of Scottish settlers. Moreover, his nostalgia for empire encourages an uncritical acceptance of Scottish sources; this tendency is most apparent in his simplistic analysis of the aboriginal people of the Darien. Although historians have begun to re-evaluate the short-lived colony, to date the identity of thousands of Scots who settled New Caledonia remains relatively unexamined. A robust understanding of the misfortunes which befell New Caledonia will evade historians as long as they lack an account of the ideals and penchants of these Scottish settlers.

I have attempted to correct this oversight by reconstructing the Scottish experience of empire as a dialogue between Scots at home and abroad about nature, ethnicity, and the commonwealth. As Scots in the Darien struggled to survive, they often

⁶ T.C. Smout, *Scottish Trade on the Eve of Union, 1660-1707* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1963), 252.

⁷ William Ferguson, *Scotland’s Relations with England: A Survey to 1707* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1977), 176.

⁸ George P. Insh, *The Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies* (London: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1932).

had to tailor and mould their European ideas to suit the exigencies of the landscape and peoples they encountered. But Scottish officials, anxious to reproduce a thriving Scotland overseas, worried incessantly that the settlers were being too conciliatory and in danger of losing their culture to the Darien. Throughout these exchanges Scottish settlers refined their knowledge of the world, and the role of Scots in that world. Hence these dialogues—environmental, intercultural, and interpersonal—form the core for my definition of Scottish colonial identity and, I hope, capture something of life in the Darien. As Franz Fanon remarks, “A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence.”⁹ Fanon’s definition of national culture captures the essence of Scottish identity as a dialogue—a shifting premise rather than an inalienable story of origin. This discourse, and hence the settlers’ identity, was enacted at the level of everyday life. Henri Lefebvre believes that the everyday is the “living root of the social,” the milieu where “social labor is organized” and “norms and images are elaborated.”¹⁰ Thus, while treating with the intellectual paradigms of the seventeenth-century, this study is primarily concerned with the transformation and elaboration of European ideas as they were enacted in the Darien. I highlight the daily experience of colonialism and the dialogue about the world Scots both encountered and engendered.

While this thesis chronicles the intellectual and cultural quagmires Scots tackled while establishing New Caledonia, it dwells upon the conflict between dreams about the

⁹ Franz Fanon quoted in Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Colonial Discourse & Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Williams, Patrick & Laura Chrisman (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 32.

¹⁰ Henri Lefebvre quoted by Thomas Holt, “Marking: Race, Race-making, and the Writing of History,” *American Historical Review* 100 (February, 1995): 10.

world overseas and the hostile environment Scots found in the Darien. Settlers imagined New Caledonia as a land of limitless plenty where peas grew to perfection in a month and gold coursed through every mountain river. In this primal and fantastic paradise Scots believed they could perfect the commonwealth and re-engineer the empire. These bold dreams were soon challenged as familiar politics and the foreign environment began to defy and destabilize dreams of the Antipodes formulated in far away Scotland. Survival among the alien fauna, flora, and inhabitants of the Isthmus required Scots in the region to rethink their convictions about themselves and their place in the world. But the breakdown of their dreams was never absolute; rather, Scottish colonial identities were steadily riven by contending interpretations of unfolding events. What coalesced among the settlers—fitfully and often without clear articulation—was a quarrel about the cause of New Caledonia’s collapse that revolved around everyday life in the Darien: ‘Did we fail to work the land or were these jungles always infertile; did we neglect our Tule allies or were they incapable of civility; did we mistreat our settlers or were they simply degenerates and villains?’ Each chapter traces a strand of the charged dialogue that formed Scottish colonial identity in the Darien.

The saga of New Caledonia began with a seemingly innocuous piece of legislation passed by the Scottish Parliament in 1693. The ‘Act for Encourageing Forraigne Trade’ allowed the Scots to form joint-stock companies that could trade with nations not at war with the King of England and Scotland. Anglo-Scottish and English merchants had promoted the project in the hopes of creating a trading company that could

challenge the dominant East India Company.¹¹ This act was also the culmination of a longstanding push by Scottish elites for colonial trade and plantations. Scots had first begun serious inquiries about colonial trade in the wake of economic recessions initiated by the collapse of the Baltic trade in the early 1680s. In 1681, Scottish merchants were gathered together by the Scottish Committee of Trade to consider the practicality of initiating trade with the Americas.¹² The merchants strongly advocated the creation of plantations; this policy fostered the establishment of Stuart's Town in South Carolina (1683) and East New Jersey (1685).¹³ For further advice and recommendations, the committee named William Colquhoun of Glasgow as the "onely persone fit for giving further encouragement to the settlement of a colony." His qualifications—in particular the "considerable fortune" he had gained as a planter in the Caribbean—intimated both the merchants' belief that colonial life brought prosperity and their amenability to the notion that the Caribbean was the ideal theatre for attaining this affluence.¹⁴ The act of 1693 set the legal groundwork for the creation of a joint-stock company that could begin exploiting the wealth of the Americas.

By 1695, support for a Scottish trading company had reached a fever pitch. The propaganda pamphlet *Proposals for a Fond to Cary on a Plantation*, released in May 1695, announced that "persons of all Ranks yea the Body of the Nation are Longing to

¹¹ Ferguson, *Scotland's Relations with England*, 177.

¹² T.M. Devine, *Scotland's Empire, 1600-1815* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 37.

¹³ For more information about Scots colonies and Scots overseas see David Dobson, "Seventeenth-Century Scottish Communities in the Americas," in *Scottish Communities Abroad in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Alexia Grosjean and Steve Murdoch (Boston: Brill, 2000), 114-122.

¹⁴ George Insh, *Scottish Colonial Schemes, 1620-1686* (Glasgow: Maclehose, Jackson, & Co, 1922), 126. The notion that the Caribbean was a land of quick riches motivated English emigration by settlers who wished to make their fortune overseas. See 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, 1972). For a contrast of New England motivations for settlement and those of Caribbean settlers see Dunn's comparison of the diaries of John Winthrop and Sir Henry Colt of St. Christopher in Richard Dunn, "Experiments Holy and Unholy, 1630-31," in *The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America, 1480-1650*, ed. K.R. Andrews, N.P. Canny, and P.E.H. Hair (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1978).

have a Plantation in *America*.”¹⁵ Several weeks later, with the spirited backing of Scottish and English merchants hoping to break the monopoly of the East India Company, the Scottish Parliament incorporated the Company of Scotland trading to Africa and the Indies.¹⁶ Parliament bestowed wide-ranging and controversial powers on the new Company. Among its more notable privileges, the Company was given the exclusive right to trade between Scotland and the Americas for thirty-one years and a permanent monopoly on Scottish trade between Africa and Asia. The Company was given leave to erect plantations on any lands in Asia, Africa, or America that were uninhabited by Europeans. Lands occupied by indigenous peoples could only be settled if the Company obtained their consent prior to colonization. Oversight of the Company’s affairs was vested in twenty directors; half would be London merchants and the rest would be Scottish men with influence in trade and politics. The balance of power between London and Edinburgh was maintained by a clause that required half of the Company’s £600,000 fund of capital to be raised in Scotland.¹⁷

The new Company was immediately perceived as a threat to English interests. The East India Company, sensitive to challenges as it awaited the renewal of its trading monopoly, began aggressively lobbying English politicians to denounce the Scots Company. The English Parliament, also anxious about the threat to English trade, moved on two fronts to undermine the Company of Scotland. Members passed new, more stringent Navigation Acts in 1696 but, in the interim, asked King William to take action against the Scots. They warned William that under the act of 1695 Scotland could

¹⁵ *Proposals for a Fond to Cary on a Plantation*, EEBO (1695).

¹⁶ The motivations of some Scottish politicians may have been political rather than economic; the Act was seen by some as a harmless way to consolidate political support among the Scottish burghs. Riley, *King William and the Scottish Politicians*, 98.

¹⁷ All monetary figures are in pounds sterling, not Scots. Insh, *The Company of Scotland*, 20-21.

undersell English merchants in the colonies and open a free port through which trade from the East Indies could be channelled into Europe, thereby circumventing English ports.¹⁸

For King William, who looked upon Scotland as a “nuisance,” the campaign by English lobbyists and parliamentarians against the Scots Company was irritating.¹⁹ But he was far more incensed by the conduct of the Scots Parliament who had—in William’s eyes—pursued the matter “as iff there had been no King of Scotland.”²⁰ The Company of Scotland was an embarrassing commentary on the King’s weakened authority in his northern kingdom.²¹ William publicly charged the Scottish Parliament with breaching his trust and overstepping their powers. He declared, “I have been ill-served in Scotland.”²² A few days later, bolstered by the King’s reaction, the English House of Lords drew up plans to pass a bill that barred English investment in the Company. The English Parliament was even more zealous, and began preparations to impeach most of the Company’s Directors.²³ By the end of December 1695, English interests in the Company of Scotland had been chased away, leaving Scotland to pursue the Company on its own.

¹⁸ David Armitage, “The Scottish Vision of Empire: Intellectual Origins of the Darien venture,” in *A Union for Empire: Political Thought and the Union of 1707*, ed. John Robertson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 100. Riley, *King William and the Scottish Politicians*, 98. Eric J. Graham, *A Maritime History of Scotland, 1650-1790* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2002), 85.

¹⁹ Ferguson, *Scotland's Relations with England*, 177-179, 174.

²⁰ Quoted in Armitage, “The Scottish Vision of Empire,” 100.

²¹ Riley, *King William and the Scottish Politicians*, 98. In 1689, the Convention of Estates in Scotland had chosen to replace James II with William and Mary. This effectively changed the relationship between King and Parliament from dependent to contractual. In addition, a hostile Parliament of Whigs and Presbyterians during the Revolution settlement of 1689 had forced King William to grant the Scotland’s governing body wide leeway in running its internal affairs. Devine, *Scotland’s Empire*, 41. and Tim Harris, *Revolution : The Great Crisis of the British Monarchy, 1685-1720* (London ; New York : Allen Lane, 2006), 386-409.

²² William had given his consent for an expansion of the 1693 act, hoping to distract Scots from the unpleasant findings of the Glencoe Commission. He had expected to be approached for final approval of the 1695 Act. Insh, *The Company of Scotland*, 57. For more details about the massacre of Glencoe (1692)—the slaying of a clan of Highlanders by government troops—and the political problems it caused for William in Scotland see Paul Hopkins, *Glencoe and the End of the Highland War* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1986).

²³ Insh, *The Company of Scotland*, 58-59.

The brusque treatment of the Company by the English Parliament and the king did little but increase Scottish interest in the project. The Marquess of Tweeddale believed that “‘Twas the notice the parliament of England first took of it that made the whole nation throng in to have some share.”²⁴ The Directors of the Company opened the subscription books in Edinburgh in February 1696 and placed £400,000 in capital on offer. In six months the Company reached its target. It was an amazing achievement, for the sum represented almost two-and-a-half times the estimated value of Scotland’s annual exports (£170,000).²⁵ Walter Herries, a virulent critic of the Company and a settler on the first expedition, would later write that investors “came in Shoals from all Corners of the Kingdom to Edinburgh, Rich, Poor, Blind, and Lane.”²⁶ The subscription books bear out his caustic account. Only a quarter of subscribers were nobles or landed proprietors; the rest were government officials, burgh representatives, tradesmen, servants, soldiers, and widows. Highlanders, however, were conspicuous in their absence from the subscription books.²⁷ Remarkably, even at this late juncture the Company had not announced whether it would focus on trade with Africa and the East Indies or devote itself to creating a colonial plantation in the Americas. The avalanche of subscriptions demonstrated the tremendous support throughout the Lowlands for a Scottish trading venture of any description.²⁸

²⁴ Insh, *The Company of Scotland*, 64. See also Armitage, “The Scottish Vision of Empire,” 101.

²⁵ Money was especially tight in Scotland in 1696 because the Company was forced to compete for investors with the Bank of Scotland. W. Douglas Jones argues that this stress on the economy would normally have sent interest rates spiraling out of control. That it did not suggests strongly that the Company was supported by investors outside of Scotland. W. Douglas Jones, “‘The Bold Adventurers’: A Quantitative Analysis of the Darien Subscription List (1696),” *Scottish Economic & Social History*, 21 (2001): 37-38.

²⁶ James Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien Including an Answer to the Defence of the Scots Settlement There*, EEBO (1700), 8.

²⁷ Jones, “‘The Bold Adventurers,’” 36-37.

²⁸ Robert Douglas quoted in Armitage, “The Scottish Vision of Empire,” 100. Subscriptions given before Paterson stepped forward with his plan were undertaken for a variety of reasons. Some hoped to gain

William Paterson has long lived in infamy as the man who first brought the Darien to Scottish attention. A settlement on the Isthmus had been his great dream for at least ten years before he raised it with the Company of Scotland. As early as 1687, Paterson was overheard in Amsterdam's coffee houses projecting schemes "to Erect a Common Wealth and Free port in the Emperour of Dariens Countrey (as he was pleased to call that poor Miserable Prince.)"²⁹ He was a dogged promoter of the venture and approached many European states with the idea; few were willing to countenance the notion of erecting a plantation in the very heart of the Spanish Empire. Following his dismissal as a Director of the Bank of England in 1695—an institution that he had helped to found only a year earlier—Paterson became a London Director for the newly created Company of Scotland. When the Company was forced out of England, he followed them to Scotland. Paterson finally presented his plan for a Darien settlement to the Company's directors in July 1696. The Directors were wooed by the proposal, despite strenuous warnings that a settlement on the Darien Isthmus would anger the Spanish and draw the ire of King William, who depended on Spain as an ally against Louis XIV. The force of Paterson's persuasive personality in tandem with the evocative testimonials offered by the buccaneers Lionel Wafer and William Dampier convinced the Company that the Darien was the ideal location for a plantation.³⁰

Contemporary observers—and many historians since—ridiculed the decision to settle in the Darien as the height of folly and hubris. But the region held strong appeal for

preferment in the eyes of the Company, others looked to consolidate their political support by publicly announcing their support of the venture, but many simply believed that trade would bring riches to Scotland. Jones, "The Bold Adventurers," 36-37. Armitage, "The Scottish Vision of Empire," 101.

²⁹ Armitage, "The Scottish Vision of Empire," 99. David Armitage, "Paterson, William (1658–1719)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004).

³⁰ See Chapter one for an analysis of Wafer's testimonial to the Directors. Armitage, "The Scottish Vision of Empire," 101. David Armitage, "Paterson, William (1658–1719)."

a small power trying to achieve great gains in the world. A declaration released by the first Council of Caledonia conveyed the hopes Scots had for the region:

[It] hath the advantage of being a Narrow Isthmus, Seated in the Height of the World, between the two vast Oceans, which renders it more convenient than any other for being the common Store-house of the Insearchable and Immense Treasures of the Spacious South Seas, the door of Commerce to China and Japan, and the Emporium and Staple for the Trade of both Indies.³¹

Scots were not the first to have been lured to the Darien jungles by the promise of South Sea riches. By the end of the seventeenth century, as the plunder of Caribbean trade routes became less lucrative and more dangerous, buccaneers were forced to turn their attention elsewhere. In 1671 Henry Morgan made a daring crossing of the Isthmus that ended in the bloody capture and ransack of Panama City, a hub of Spanish influence in the South Seas. Inspired by this example, many buccaneers followed suit and crossed to the Pacific through the sparsely defended jungles of Darien.³² In 1680, Bartholomew Sharpe, Dampier and Wafer were among 330 buccaneers that traversed the Isthmus with the intent of attacking Panama City after sacking Portobello. Their plans to take Panama were foiled by the desertions and deaths they suffered during the arduous trek.³³ Nor was the French presence in the area negligible. During the last days of the War of the Grand Alliance (1688-1697), French privateers along with army regulars dealt a blow to Spanish pride when they captured and looted Cartagena, a large port on the coast of present-day Colombia.³⁴ Moreover, the war had ensured a proliferation of letters of marque from

³¹ Hugh Rose, *Caledonia: The Declaration of the Council*, (Boston, 1699), 3.

³² For a picture of colonial defences in the Darien see Ignacio Gallup-Diaz, "Military Leadership in the Age of the Buccaneers, 1667-1698," in *The Door of the Seas and Key to the Universe: Indian Politics and Imperial Rivalry in the Darien, 1640-1750* (Gutenberg<e>, Columbia University Press. 2001).

³³ Glyndwr Williams, *The Great South Sea: English Voyages and Encounters, 1570-1750* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 82-84.

³⁴ Geoffrey J. Walker, *Spanish Politics and Imperial Trade, 1700-1789* (London: MacMillan Press, 1979), 21.

France that encouraged privateers to prey on Spanish shipping around the isthmus.³⁵ The impunity with which these expeditions inflicted wanton destruction on Spanish possessions fostered the perception that the Darien jungle was “an open highway for northern Europeans seeking access to the unprotected waters of the Pacific.”³⁶

The chaos prevalent throughout the Spanish Indies fit the received opinion of the day that Spain was suffering a precipitous decline in power and influence during the seventeenth century; even now Spanish historians still struggle against the portrayal of the 1690s as a “decade of decay.”³⁷ The wildly popular tales published by many buccaneers in England added immeasurably to this perception. For example, in 1697 William Dampier published a record of his exploits entitled *A New Voyage Round the World*; by 1699 the book was in its fourth edition and Dampier regularly dined with England’s most influential men.³⁸ On the whole, buccaneering journals faithfully repeated the popular trope that the Spanish were incompetent sailors, their territories vulnerable to attack, and their dominions haunted by the spectre of Indian rebellion. Dampier summarized the state of Spain as follows: “The *Spaniards* have more than they can well manage. I know yet, they would lie like the *Dog in the Manger*; although not able to eat themselves, yet they would endeavour to hinder others.”³⁹

The Company’s Directors were buoyed by the belief that the Spanish Empire was, at least in the Americas, a paper tiger. They were also keen to believe stories that reported an estrangement between the Spanish and the Tule, the aboriginal group occupying most

³⁵ Gallup-Diaz, “The Spanish Management of Imperial Chaos, 1698-1701,” 2-3.

³⁶ Christopher Ward, *Imperial Panama: Commerce and Conflict in Isthmian America, 1550-1800* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 175.

³⁷ Christopher Storrs, “Disaster at Darien (1698-1700)?: The Persistence of Spanish Imperial Power on the Eve of the Demise of the Spanish Hapsburgs,” *European History Quarterly* 29 (1999): 7.

³⁸ Williams, *The Great South Sea*, 82-84.

³⁹ Williams, 134.

of eastern Panama during the Early Modern period.⁴⁰ Captain Dampier reported that the “*Indians of Darien*” had invited the buccaneers to “pass through their Country, and fall upon the Spaniards in the South Seas.”⁴¹ According to the articles of the Company, settlements could only be established on uninhabited lands or lands consigned to the Scots by the freely given consent of the local aboriginal population. Unfortunately for the Scots, by the end of the seventeenth century most of the Americas, including the Darien, had been claimed by other European powers. Undaunted, supporters of the Company initiated a propaganda campaign that invoked the accounts of Dampier, Wafer and others to prove the independence of the Tule aboriginals. The pamphleteers used indictments of Spanish cruelty toward the aboriginals made by Bartolomé de Las Casas, Franciscan missionary and Bishop of Chiapas, alongside territorial challenges. “The Dariens,” insisted Lord Belhaven, “are in actual possession of their liberty, and were never subdued, nor received any Spanish government or garrison amongst them.”⁴² The belief that the Tule were free, and yet oppressed by the Spanish, provided both moral and political justification for the Scottish scheme to erect a plantation on the Isthmus.

With a destination firmly in mind, the Directors sent agents to Amsterdam and Hamburg to gather more subscriptions for the Company and to coordinate the construction of a fleet. Publicly they said nothing of their plans for settling in the Darien, and maintained the ruse that they were a Company with trading interests in Africa and

⁴⁰ Many of the primary documents written by Scots call the natives of eastern Panama Cuna. This group still exists in modern day Panama, but are better known as the San Blas Kuna. I follow the ethno-historian Ignacio Gallup-Diaz in my preference for the term Tule—the word for person in their language. Tule also reflects the substantive historical changes and geographical movement which the San Blas Kuna have undergone during 400 years of contact. Gallup-Diaz, “Introduction.”

⁴¹ Williams, 84. See Lionel Wafer, *A New Voyage and Description of the Isthmus of America*, EEBO (1698), 11.

⁴² Gallup-Diaz, “Tule Interactions with the Scots and the English at the Close of the Seventeenth Century,” 16, fn. 80.

India.⁴³ The concerted opposition of England and the established trading companies of Amsterdam ensured that attempts to bolster the Company's meagre funds failed.⁴⁴

Despite this opposition, the Company was able to contract shipbuilders in Amsterdam and Hamburg to construct most of the fleet. By the end of 1697, the Company could boast five new ships: the *Caledonia*, *Saint Andrew*, and *Unicorn* and the smaller vessels *Dolphin* and *Endeavor*.⁴⁵

With their fleet in order the directors turned to the task of outfitting them with men and supplies. They organized the political and social framework of their new colony along martial lines. To guard against the dangers of corruption and tyranny the directors decided the colony would be ruled by a council of seven appointed men. The rest of the settlers were organized into a pseudo-military structure. Captains, lieutenants and ensigns were rebranded "Overseers," "Sub-Overseers," and "Assistants." The remaining New Caledonians—except the sailors—were "Planters."⁴⁶ The 1200 settlers chosen were, as the dismayed soldier Samuel Vetch wrote to his mother, a "mixed lot."⁴⁷ There were some disbanded soldiers from the continental wars, but many more were young men who had been given preferment over seasoned officers on account of their family connections.⁴⁸ There were also a number of Highlanders with strong Jacobite sympathies

⁴³ Herries claims that this ruse was so thorough that many of the ships were designed and stocked with goods for India. Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien*, 18.

⁴⁴ In Hamburg, where support for the Scots company was strongest, merchants were told in no uncertain terms that support of the Scots India Company would be seen by King William as "an Affront to his Royal Authority...that he would not fail to resent." *The Original Papers and Letters Relating to the Scots Company Trading to Africa and the Indies*, EEBO (1700), 4-5.

⁴⁵ These ships almost doubled the "foreign-going" tonnage of Scotland. Graham, *A Maritime History of Scotland*, 84-85.

⁴⁶ See Chapter three for further analysis of New Caledonia's social structure.

⁴⁷ G.M. Waller, *Samuel Vetch, Colonial Enterpriser*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), 18.

⁴⁸ For example, the Scottish Lord Seafield complained that he was inundated with requests for preferments that he could not grant: "I have multitudes of broken officers lying about my doors and I know not what to say to them." John Prebble, *The Darien Disaster* (London: Penguin, 1968), 112.

who had chosen a life abroad to escape troubles in Scotland.⁴⁹ There is no indication how many settlers were Highlanders on the first expedition. But Francis Borland, a minister to the second expedition, reported with frustration that a third of his flock were “wild *Highlanders*, that cannot speak nor understand *Scotch*, which are Barbarians to us and we to them.”⁵⁰ Little more is known about the quality and character of most of the men, and those few women, who were accepted as settlers by the Company of Scotland.

On 19 July, 1698 the first expedition of the Company of Scotland weighed anchor and left Scotland. Even at this late date their final destination was an official secret known only to a few of the council; most settlers were not told until the fleet reached the Madeira Islands.⁵¹ On 2 November, after three-and-a-half months at sea, the Scots made landfall on the Isthmus. The colony was immediately beset by problems. The council, intended to act as a control on corruption, became a vehicle for intrigue and plotting. The hallmark of this fractured government was the unusual decision to institute a rotating weekly presidency. Without an able and commanding leader the council made little headway in settling and clearing the Darien.⁵² Tensions in the colony were immeasurably worsened by shortfalls in the imported provisions. Only days after leaving Scotland, settlers were forced to submit to rationing; the policy persisted through the entire life of the colony.⁵³ To make matters worse, the colonists, though inundated with European visitors, heard nothing from Scotland during their time in the Darien. In Scotland,

⁴⁹ Waller, *Samuel Vetch*, 18.

⁵⁰ Francis Borland, *Memoirs of Darien: Giving a Short Description of that Country*, ECCO (Glasgow: 1715), 55.

⁵¹ George P. Insh, “Sailing Orders,” *Papers Relating to the Ships and Voyages of the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies* (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, 1924), 64-66.

⁵² See Chapter one for a discussion of settlement and planting undertaken by the first and second colony.

⁵³ See Chapter three.

attempts to reinforce the colony were frustrated by shipwrecks and supply shortages.⁵⁴

George Moffat reported that the colonists were isolated for seven months, without “ye scratch of a pen, nor what to make of ye dubiousness of there present condition.”⁵⁵

Inadequate communications heightened apprehensions about Spanish reprisals against the colony. Rumours had begun circulating as early as December that the Spanish were mobilizing a land and sea assault against the Scots. In February, the Scots received a temporary morale boost after 170 Scottish troops led by James Montgomery routed a small Spanish force not far from the colony.⁵⁶ But the Spanish threat, which hung over the colony like a black pall, did not materialize while the Scots were settled on the Isthmus. During the final months of the colony, settlers were afflicted instead by the ravages of yellow fever, malaria, and dysentery. In this climate of penury and illness the colonists were seized by despair and doubt. The final blow to their hopes came from a series of Royal Proclamations passed by Bermuda, Jamaica, New York and Boston in the summer of 1699. The proclamations, legislated at the behest of King William, prohibited Englishmen in the region from offering aid or engaging in trade with settlers from New Caledonia.⁵⁷ The proclamations were read as a sign that King William had officially abandoned the colonists. In tandem with vague reports that the Scottish Parliament had

⁵⁴ An early attempt to send extra provisions aboard the *Dispatch* in February was undone by a tragic shipwreck off of the Western Isles of Scotland. The next relief vessels, *Hopeful Binning* and *Olive Branch* arrived two months after the first expedition departed. Tragically, brandy provisions aboard the *Olive Branch* were accidentally light on fire and the ship sank in Caledonia Harbor. Burton, “Dispatches and Letters from the Directors to the Council at the Colony: Edinburgh, 15 April, 1699,” *The Darien Papers: Being a Selection of Original Letters and Official Documents Relating to the Establishment of a Colony at Darien by the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies, 1695-1700* (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, 1849), 124. Borland, *Memoirs of Darien*, 26.

⁵⁵ Burton, “Letters—George Moffat to Messrs. Joseph Ormston, Alexander Hamilton, and Company,” 145.

⁵⁶ Gallup-Diaz, “The Spanish Management of Imperial Chaos, 1698-1701,” 14. Burton, *The Darien Papers*, 84-86.

⁵⁷ The arrival of Scots in the Darien embroiled William in a political fiasco. William viewed Spain as a key ally against France’s design for European domination. He publicly rebuked the Scots in an effort to distance himself from Scottish actions and consolidate support for England in the Spanish Court. In England, government officials wrote that “his Majesty has of himself done all that the Spaniards could have desired of him, either for the preventing or defeating of this expedition.” Insh, *Company of Scotland*, 147-149.

denied aid to the Company, they convinced Caledonians that Scotland had been “brow-beaten out of it [the colony].”⁵⁸ The Caledonians, disillusioned and ill, deserted their cherished colony on 22 June, 1699—eight months after their arrival.⁵⁹

The settlers of the second expedition set out from Scotland on 24 September, 1699. They were blissfully unaware that the first settlement at New Caledonia had been forsaken several months earlier. On 30 November the second expedition sailed into Caledonia harbour alarmed to discover that the colony was vacant.⁶⁰ With no government to be found, Counsellor James Byres assumed de facto leadership of the new settlement. He was an intemperate ruler who spied disobedience and dishonesty everywhere he looked.⁶¹ Throughout his presidency, Byres hotly refused to countenance military actions against the Spanish. He went so far as to tell the Reverend Alexander Shields that “it was unlawful for Christians, under the New Testament Dispensation, to make any war.” When Shields asserted that Byres was mistaken, Byres “upbraided me to my face with nonsense, contradicting the Gospell, and tempting men to Atheism.”⁶² On 7 February, 1700, Byres fled the colony purportedly to procure supplies for the colonists from Jamaica. He was quickly replaced by the newly arrived counsellor, Captain Alexander Campbell of Fonab.⁶³ Unfortunately for the Scots, while Byres had blocked attempts to

⁵⁸ Burton, “Report by William Paterson to the Directors,” 192.

⁵⁹ The remaining men, around 900, were equally distributed in the three largest vessels. The *Caledonia* and *Unicorn* both made for New York, meanwhile the *St. Andrew* set in at Jamaica. Only the *Caledonia*, Captained by Robert Drummond, managed to return to Scotland. Burton, *The Darien Papers*, 143-154. For a collection of documents about the Scottish reception in New York see Insh, *Darien Shipping Papers*, 114-128.

⁶⁰ For reactions see Chapter one and Chapter three.

⁶¹ Among his many questionable actions, he arrested Thomas Drummond, a member of the first expedition who had chosen to return to the Darien to help the new colonists. Byres imprisoned Drummond and others who suggested undertaking an attack on the Spaniards, offering little explanation except that they were “mutinous and seditious.” Burton, *The Darien Papers*, 237.

⁶² Burton, “From the Revd. Alexander Shields: *Rising Sun*,” 249

⁶³ Burton, “From the Revd. Alexander Shields: *Rising Sun*,” 249

fortify the colony and harass Spanish holdings, Spain's military machine had been assembling the pieces for a full-scale assault on the Scottish position.

Officials in the Spanish Empire took the Scottish threat very seriously. The Scots colony was wedged between the vital maritime cities of Portobello and Cartagena. Portobello and nearby Panama City occupied an especially sensitive region of the Spanish Empire. The wealth of the Spanish Indies was regularly transported across the narrow isthmus that separated these two cities. From there it was shipped across the Atlantic and into Spanish coffers. The Spanish were apprehensive that the Scots soldiers might ally themselves with the local Tule, thereby yoking local aboriginal discontent to the resources and ambitions of a European nation. Moreover, Spanish officials feared that this allegiance would allow the Scots to improve upon the example set by the buccaneers during the 1680s.⁶⁴ The Viceroy of Mexico, invoking the memory of the buccaneers' brutal rampages, anxiously warned of the threat posed to these cities by the Scots: "If this was done by 200 pirates, what may be feared from the 4000 veteran soldiers now supposed to be at Darien[?]"⁶⁵ The Spanish had already attempted to oust the first colony in an abortive joint land and sea attack, but the small force faced by Montgomery was the only element of this expedition that reached New Caledonia. Their fleet was held back by illness and the threat of shipwreck on the jagged Darien coast, while their land force of 1500 men abandoned an overland trek in the face of intense winter rains.⁶⁶ Renewed attempts to expel the intruders were undertaken in 1700. On 13 February, the Scots learned of an overland force of 1600 Spaniards heading toward the colony. Campbell,

⁶⁴ Storrs, "Disaster at Darien (1698-1700)?," 8-9.

⁶⁵ Francis Hart, *The Disaster of Darien* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1929), 258-259.

⁶⁶ Storrs, "Disaster at Darien (1698-1700)?," 11-12.

with a small number of Scots and Tule, routed the Spaniards at Toubacanti.⁶⁷ This was to be a pyrrhic victory, for a few days later Spanish troops encircled the colony. For the next two months the Spanish besieged New Caledonia. On 30 March, the Spanish General Don Pimienta threatened that the Scots would suffer greatly if he was forced to undertake his final assault. The counsellors refused Pimienta's calls for surrender, telling him "we consider it better to die honourably than to live without honour."⁶⁸ Pimienta, impressed by the resolve of the Scots, agreed to generous terms of surrender. On April 12, the Scots sailed out of New Caledonia never to set foot upon the isthmus again.

The second abdication of New Caledonia had calamitous repercussions in Scotland. Scots of a religious bent viewed the failure of the Darien colony as God's punishment for the nation's sins. Following the collapse of the first expedition, an anonymous poet exclaimed, "We've lost our Men, and our Money, / our Provender, and Ships at Sea, / Thô it be no Wonder, / for the great Sin which we ly under."⁶⁹ A popular pamphlet, *The Sighs and Groans for a Sinking Kingdom*, deplored the morality of "our SCOTS PAGANS" who taught the aborigines to blaspheme the Lord. "Ah!" the pamphlet concluded, "What *Scotsman* is able to Reflect on these things without Tears of Indignation, and self-abhorancy[?]"⁷⁰ It seems that the nation had entered an intense crisis of confidence. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland urged the populace to atone for their iniquities; they called for national days of humiliation, fasting, and prayer in 1699 (the last one had been held in 1692), and then again in 1700, 1701, 1704,

⁶⁷ For more details see Chapter two.

⁶⁸ Insh, *Company of Scotland*, 197.

⁶⁹ *Scotland's Lament for Their Misfortunes*, EEBO (Edinburgh, 1700).

⁷⁰ *The Sighs and Groans of a Sinking Kingdom in an Humble Address to the Parliament of Scotland*, EEBO (London: 1700), 5.

1705, and 1706 in response to Scotland's worsening economic circumstances.⁷¹ Other Scots, such as Lord Belhaven, turned their anger toward the English and King William. The English government, charged Belhaven, persuaded William to denounce the Act of 1695 and so reject his Scottish subjects. In doing so they "struck at the Independency of the Nation, through the Bowels of the Company."⁷² The Royal Proclamations, which many Scots unfairly regarded as the reason for the colony's failure, proved that King William would always sacrifice Scottish interests on the altar of English foreign policy. For the prominent Scot George Melville, William's opposition to New Caledonia constituted "an unanswerable argument, that the crowns of England and Scotland are incompatible."⁷³

New Caledonia failed for many reasons—not least because it was plagued by mismanagement, poor timing, inept leadership, and disease. Yet historians have long regarded the scheme's collapse as damning evidence of Scotland's inability to succeed overseas during the seventeenth century. Certainly, the string of abortive Scottish ventures that preceded the expeditions of 1698 and 1699—Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, North Carolina—have fostered the notion that seventeenth-century Scotland was a nation unsuited to colonial enterprise.⁷⁴ New Caledonia, as the greatest and last of these plantations, has been installed as "the disastrous apogee of a movement to found Scottish colonies and exotic trades."⁷⁵ The legacy of failure that characterized Scotland's early

⁷¹ Christopher Whatley, "Taking Stock: Scotland at the End of the Seventeenth Century," In *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 127 (2005), 107.

⁷² Belhaven, *A Speech in Parliament*, 8.

⁷³ Quoted in Riley, *King William and the Scottish Politicians*, 137.

⁷⁴ This is a highly problematic notion. David Dobson demonstrates that these early colonial projects were joint ventures between Scotland and England. Dobson, "Seventeenth-Century Scottish Communities," 129.

⁷⁵ Smout, *Scottish Trade on the Eve of Union*, 28.

colonial history has been magnified by the dramatic improvement in Scottish fortunes overseas following the Union of Scotland and England in 1707. John MacKenzie argues that:

in the Scottish case, the Union of 1707 remained the defining moment, as a result of which Scottish fortunes were transformed and the Scots, despite glances to the past, threw themselves...into the imperial project. Such an interpretation required a severe disjunction between Scottish fortunes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, allegedly stagnating in the one and galvanized in the other.⁷⁶

This dichotomy has particularly damaged historical analysis of the Darien venture. In regarding the late-seventeenth century as a period of decline, historians have often overlooked the innovative attempt to guarantee Scottish independence by exercising new parliamentary powers to create a powerful trading company capable of bringing the riches of the East and West Indies to Scottish shores.⁷⁷

Although New Caledonia did not succeed, its demise and that of previous Scottish colonial enterprises seem less exceptional once they are contextualized within a broader history of European colonization, much of it riddled with bungled colonial schemes. Europeans struggled for many years to identify the basics of “civilized” society and to recreate these in the untamed and remote colonial periphery: death, dispossession, and failure were routine challenges for early ventures undertaken by inexperienced nations.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ John MacKenzie, “Foreword,” in *Military Governors and Imperial Frontiers C. 1600-1800: A Study of Scotland and Empires*, ed. Andrew Mackillop and Steve Murdoch (Boston: Brill, 2003), xv.

⁷⁷ Armitage, “The Scottish Vision of Empire,” 117-118.

⁷⁸ For this problem see Karen Kupperman, “The Beehive as a Model for Colonial Design,” in *America in European Consciousness, 1493-1750*, ed. Karen Kupperman (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995). Also, Fry brings this point up in explaining the early failures of the Nova Scotia and Newfoundland settlements: “These Scottish exertions are usually scorned, but the truth was that several European nations wishing to emulate the Spaniards or Portuguese...had as yet found no means to do so.” Michael Fry, *The Scottish Empire* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Press, 2001), 23. The argument of colonial inexperience can also be extended to the Darien venture. Dobson suggests that the Darien colony was the first uniquely Scottish undertaking, previous ventures such as those mentioned by Fry, had been undertaken in co-operation with English merchants. Dobson, “Seventeenth-Century Scottish Communities,” 129. Deprived of this experience, Scots were liable to unwittingly repeat the mistakes of earlier colonial ventures.

Moreover, there are significant problems with the argument that the Darien expedition was a hopeless endeavour, undone by a Scottish state too weak, too poor, and too naïve to have succeeded in the Darien without divine intervention. As David Armitage poignantly observes, “Because it failed with great loss of blood and treasure, it has always been seen as doomed to fail: but how then do we explain the hostility of other European nations to the plan?”⁷⁹

The fatalistic portrayal of seventeenth-century Scotland’s colonial history has discouraged historical writing about Scottish life in the Americas.⁸⁰ The Darien expedition, in particular, has suffered from a strange lack of historical investigation. The most influential and comprehensive treatment of the Darien scheme remains George P. Insh’s *The Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies* written in 1932. Insh’s work, while invaluable, is plagued by the same dichotomy that sees Scotland’s pre-Union plantations as doomed to failure. In his broad survey *Scottish Colonial Schemes, 1620-1686* Insh blames the failure of pre-Darien projects on the “acute religious dissension” that plagued Scotland for much of the seventeenth century. Following the Revolution, according to Insh, the Scottish people were able to put aside religious differences and invest themselves in colonial enterprise. But if neglect had crippled early expeditions, New Caledonia was undone by an irrational enthusiasm for colonial trade among the Scottish people that could not be restrained by sober second thought. “It was of a piece

⁷⁹ Armitage, “The Scottish Vision of Empire,” 98.

⁸⁰ Notable exceptions to this are the work of John G. Reid and Ned C. Landsman. Landsman blames a strange dichotomy that sees pre-Union Scotland as heavily involved in continental Europe while post-Union Scotland opens its eyes to affairs in the Americas. The latter view, Landsman notes, incorrectly “attributes Scotland’s opening to the world to the Union, the Empire, and English connections generally.” Ned C. Landsman, “Introduction,” in *Nation and Province in the First British Empire: Scotland and the Americas, 1600-1800*, ed. Ned C. Landsman (Lewisburgh: Bucknell University Press, 2001), 20. For a survey of Scottish activities in Nova Scotia during the seventeenth century see John G. Reid, “The Conquest of ‘Nova Scotia’: Cartographic Imperialism and the Echoes of a Scottish Past,” in *Nation and Province in the First British Empire*, 39-59.

with the tragic traditions of Scottish history,” comments Insh, “that the work wrought by this new power [the desire for colonies] should have been one of destruction.”⁸¹ The perception that the expedition was ordained to fail leaves insufficient room for a historical understanding of the exigencies of human actors.

Insh’s reliance upon stereotypical national characters to explain individual actions also proves problematic. In particular, his narrative is often coloured by nostalgic depictions of Scots settlers as resolute, grim and martial.⁸² The Scots’ virtues are displayed to full effect during a quarrel between Scottish officers and Tule levies during the battle of Toubacanti. The Tule, led by a Lieutenant Turnbull, refused Scottish orders to undertake an uphill assault against an entrenched Spanish position, claiming it was too hazardous. “The situation is serious, very serious,” writes Insh. “Can Lieutenant Turnbull...who knows the Indian temperament, do anything to influence the recalcitrant allies?” Turnbull attempted to persuade the levies that death in the line of duty was honorable and noble, but was rebuked with laughter. “To a man of Turnbull’s training,” observes Insh, “such an attitude of detachment cannot but be intensely disconcerting.”⁸³ Insh’s description of the event, powered by stereotypes of virtuous Scots coaxing irrational and selfish Aborigines, does not consider the wisdom of the Tule’s opposition to the Scots’ plan to storm numerically superior Spanish forces.⁸⁴ Oddly, the same martial virtue lauded in Turnbull is later invoked by Insh to explain the limited success of the

⁸¹ Insh, *Scottish Colonial Schemes*, 21.

⁸² An early example of this appears in his comparison of the Puritan who chose to leave England when hounded by persecution and the Scottish Covenanter who chose to stay under similar circumstances. He concluded that the former was a “prudent man” where the latter faced his troubles with a “grim resolution.” Insh, *Scottish Colonial Schemes*, 23.

⁸³ Insh, *The Company of Scotland*, 190.

⁸⁴ For further analysis of Turnbull’s speech see Chapter two.

colony. When, during the early days of the Spanish siege of New Caledonia, surrender was proposed to the Scots, Insh says that dour resolve pushed them to reject the proposal:

At this summons the old martial spirit of the Scots flamed forth. Here at last in this sorry business in which they were so ill at ease, this business of futile settlement and ineffective trading, was something they could understand, an emergency for which they were ready through the old traditions of their race.⁸⁵

In this line of argument, the Scots people are castigated as inappropriate settlers whose attempts to found a plantation or build a network of trade are frustrated by their penchant for combat. Relying upon a one-dimensional and ahistorical stereotype of Scottish character, Insh's account tends to simplify the conflicted realities of Scottish colonial life by effacing individual agency.

Historians of Spain have helped to complicate Insh's relatively inward-looking narrative of the colony and thereby qualify his fatalistic assessment of New Caledonia's viability. In 1929, Francis Russell Hart wrote *The Disaster of Darien*, a narrative account of the colony that drew heavily on Spanish sources. Hart, guided by then untapped Spanish documents relating to New Caledonia, revealed that Spain perceived the Scottish incursion as a dire threat to their American territories. According to Hart, the Spanish "considered the Scotsmen as an English outpost designed for the purposes of conquest."⁸⁶ Recent work by Christopher Storrs and Ignacio Gallup-Diaz draws and expands on Hart's conclusions. According to Storrs, the Spanish were apprehensive that the Scots would imitate the buccaneers of the 1680s. To counter this threat they assembled the largest overseas expedition ever amassed during the reign of Carlos II to oust the settlers. The fleet was so impressive that Louis XIV feared it was to escort one of the Austrian

⁸⁵ Insh, *The Company of Scotland*, 195.

⁸⁶ Hart, *The Disaster of Darien*, 86.

Habsburgs—rivals to his own grandson for Carlos’ throne—to Spain.⁸⁷ Scottish success in the Darien, concludes Storrs, was “almost inconceivable” given the empire’s superior diplomatic, financial and military resources.⁸⁸ But even if Spain’s intensive military and naval mobilization may have precluded New Caledonia’s long life, it was an important testament to the feasibility of the colony in a more general sense.⁸⁹

The euro-centric bias of historical writing about the colony has contributed to the relative neglect of the Tule, the Scots’ most important ally in the Darien. Early histories extolled the benefits of the Scottish empire for the aboriginals, but neglected to explore the crucial role the Tule played in New Caledonia’s legal legitimacy and physical survival. In John Prebble’s popular history of the colony, for example, the Tule are akin to unpredictable children—a source of both frustration and amusement for the colonists. “They sometimes pressed brandy upon these simple people as men will indulge an appealing child with sweets.”⁹⁰ In 1994, Bridget McPhail began addressing this problem in her study of the Scottish pamphlet literature that established the Company’s right to settle on the Isthmus. McPhail traced the arguments of Scottish writers who contended that the ‘Dariens’ (Tule) were not subjects of the Spanish, but rather an independent people who were “no different in point of right than any European prince.”⁹¹ Many of these authors argued that Spanish claims to Tule territory were unlawful since they were acquired during their cruel conquest of the Americas. If Spanish claims to the region were illicit and the aboriginals were a free people, then the Tule were free to accept or

⁸⁷ Storrs, “Disaster at Darien (1698-1700)?,” 26, n88. Gallup-Diaz, “The Spanish Management of Imperial Chaos, 1698-1701.”

⁸⁸ Storrs, 27.

⁸⁹ This point has been picked up by newer surveys of the Scots abroad. Devine, *Scotland’s Empire*, 47.

⁹⁰ Prebble, *The Darien Disaster*, 159.

⁹¹ Bridget McPhail, “Through a Glass, Darkly: Scots and Indians Converge at Darien,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 18 (November 1994): 138.

reject the Scottish presence on the Isthmus without Spain's input.⁹² Recent work by Ignacio Gallup-Diaz suggests that Scottish preconceptions of the Tule and their Spanish masters were shaped by "an utter internalization of the Black Legend." This belief, based on Sir Walter Raleigh's sixteenth-century accounts of the Americas, held that aboriginals under Spain's despotic rule were yearning for liberty and eager to aid Spain's enemies.⁹³ The Scots were confident that the Tule, purportedly angry with the Spanish, would happily accept their overtures for an alliance. Yet, Gallup-Diaz's close analysis of Scot-Tule interactions during the first colony reveals that the Tule were independent actors with their own agendas—agendas that often frustrated Scots who expected grateful aboriginal allies.

Recently Scottish historians have sought to recast the collapse of the Darien project as a failure with a positive result. Michael Fry presents the Darien project as an innovative attempt to create a city of free and open commerce in an age that still preferred a mercantilist model of trade. The scheme, despite its tragic end, gave Scots a unique vision of the world abroad and "sowed a seed for...times more favorable to liberalism."⁹⁴ A similar, if more daring, analysis by Dennis Hidalgo suggests that withdrawal of English interests from the project was not as disastrous as it appeared to Scots at the time. The Company of Scotland became an "atypical manifestation of history...at the dawn of modern capitalism, a joint stock company that reflected the popular support of a democratic movement."⁹⁵ He contends that the Darien scheme

⁹² McPhail, 137.

⁹³ Gallup-Diaz, "Tule Interactions with the Scots and the English," 1.

⁹⁴ Fry, *The Scottish Empire*, 30.

⁹⁵ Dennis Hidalgo, "To Get Rich For our Homeland: The Company of Scotland and the Colonization of the Isthmus of Darien," in *Colonial Latin America Historical Review* 10 (2001), 327. Hidalgo does provide an overview of life in New Caledonia. It adds the Tule and the Spanish to a narrative that otherwise resembles that of Insh. His distinctive ideas are those presented here.

though short-lived, had for a time expanded and “made the individual feel a part of that expanded Scottish world.” Accordingly, the experience “accelerated and reinforced a nationalist current” already budding in seventeenth-century Scotland.⁹⁶ W. Douglas Jones’ analysis of the subscription books of the Company of Scotland goes much further than either Fry or Hidalgo by suggesting that the Darien disaster was, with qualifications, a constructive experience. In Jones’ judgment, the Darien scheme was both an economic and cultural milestone in the history of Scotland. The subscription process, by introducing many Scots to the ideas of debt and credit, “initiated a financial revolution in Scotland.” Moreover, Jones also believes the Darien episode was a “proto-national experience” that brought Scots from all sections of society together in a heated public debate.⁹⁷ The emerging consensus is that New Caledonia was an innovative venture that catalyzed transformations in Scottish economic and political life, but left the Darien untouched. As Dennis Hidalgo wryly concluded, it was one of the few colonial projects where the outcome “affected the intrusive kingdom more than the coveted country.”⁹⁸ Such pronouncements have left little incentive for the study of colonial life in New Caledonia. By rescuing the project as an idea, but ignoring the intriguing manifestations of Scottish identity formed in the Darien, historians have missed out on a unique episode of the nation’s history.

The following chapters attempt to re-examine not only the project, but the settlers who undertook to make it a reality. Chapter one discusses the interwoven material and intellectual challenges posed by the possession of land in the Darien jungle. The Scots, conditioned by Baconian and religious thought that enshrined man as the superintendent

⁹⁶ Hidalgo, 350.

⁹⁷ Jones, “The Bold Adventurers,” 39-40.

⁹⁸ Hidalgo, “To Get Rich For our Homeland,” 317.

of the natural world, set out to radically remake the landscape of the Isthmus. They appealed to an ideology of improvement to aid their efforts to intellectually tame and physically transform the exotic jungle. Yet the failure to improve the Darien not only sealed the fates of the Scots, it was also perceived by some to be a commentary on their character. The chapter traces the shift in Scottish thought that allowed improvement, a tool for understanding the natural world, to become a powerful moral discourse.

Chapter two explores the Scottish rhetoric of empire and its pervasive impact on inter-cultural encounters in the Darien. Seventeenth-century Scots who wanted desperately to reverse the declining economic fortunes of their nation turned to colonial trade for salvation. Latecomers to the world of empire, Scots hoped to skirt the animosities of the imperial world by founding a progressive empire of cooperation, toleration and trade. They assumed that the Tule, purportedly eager for European trade and culture, would become willing subjects of their new empire. Yet the aboriginals who craved Scottish tutelage turned out to be frustratingly independent and savvy. As Scots struggled to manage this relationship, they drew increasingly uncharitable conclusions about the civility of their once vaunted allies in the Darien.

The third chapter emphasizes the link between the mundane world of food and the politics of desertion and mutiny. Government legitimacy in the Americas hinged upon the reliable and predictable distribution of food. The Council of Caledonia, plagued by food shortages, struggled to maintain its authority over settlers and curb rising dissent without driving disillusioned planters to desperation. Throughout I investigate the mutable language of the commonwealth that was used to justify both colonial discipline and planter revolt. The commonwealth, I contend, was defined by the continuous dialogue

between the conventions of Scottish society and the planters' eager anticipation of a different life in the Darien.

Chapter 1: Clearcutting the Shades of Love

Here was likewise a stately Plantain Walk, and a Grove of other small Trees, that would make a pleasant artificial Wilderness, if Industry and Art were bestowed on it.

Lionel Wafer, 1699

The Darien turned out to be less a piece of terrain than a state of mind, a wild frontier utterly divorced from the moral inhibitions of ordinary human society.

Wade Davis, 1996

For settlers, knowledge of a place was initially more a product of imagination than first-hand experience. “The place in which a pioneer like Caleb Burchett lived,” wrote Paul Carter about Botany Bay, Australia, “was not *there* in advance of his intent to settle...To begin with, it was dark with horizons. It was uncleared, unnamed: as a place, invisible and silent.” Settlement was characterized by the progressive conversion of the unfamiliar into the familiar. “The process of settlement was not...a simple physical ‘taming’ of the land, but, on the contrary, a process of teaching the country to speak.”¹ As a process settlement created an intimate relationship between people and place, rendering the experience of settlement tangibly different from that of exploration. Explorers encountered places frequently but rarely stayed; they named their places accordingly. The place names chosen by Captain Cook speak more to the events that occurred upon his journey than the objective qualities of any particular landscape. The harbour of Cook's first landing in New Zealand was triumphantly named after his flagship, the *Endeavor*. But while performing revisions of his logs in Batavia he renamed it Poverty Bay. This renaming was not only a re-evaluation of its importance in the story of his expedition, but also a testament to the tentative connection between the physical landscape and the

¹ Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), 293, 136.

names chosen by explorers.² Settlers, for whom the encounter with the environment of a new world was studied, intense and characterized by increasing obligation to their created world, spoke a different dialect than their exploring brethren and named their places accordingly.

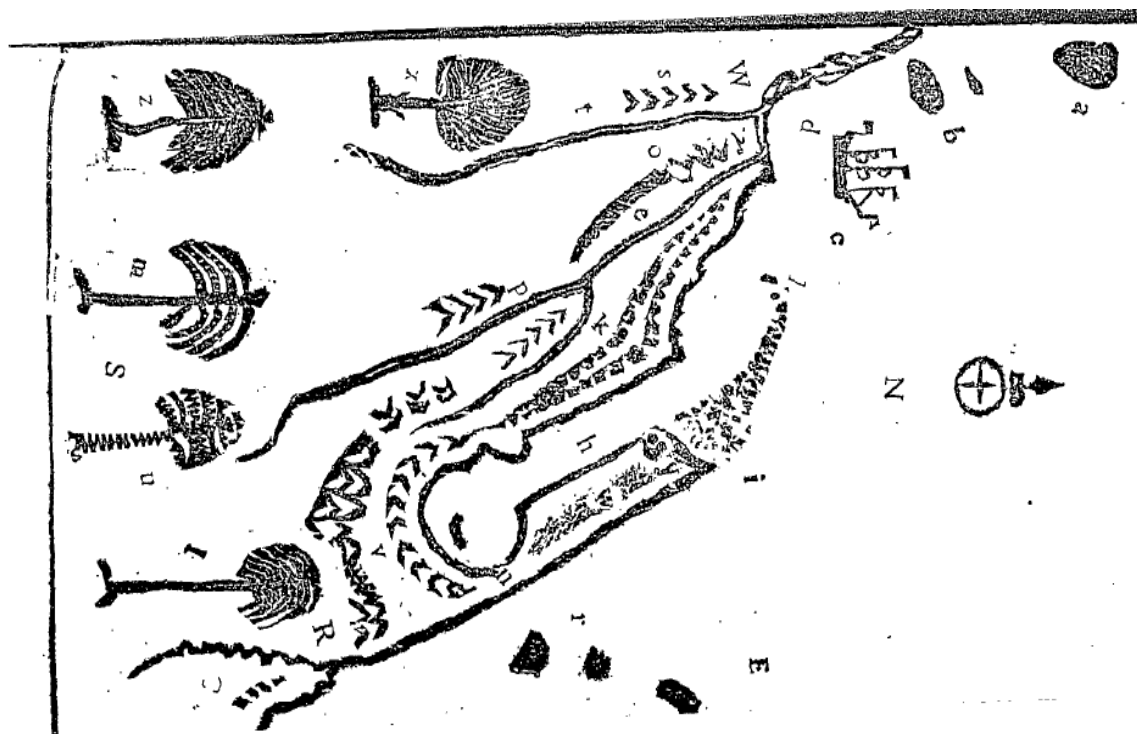
A comparison of two maps of the Darien region—one produced in 1699 and the other in 1715—is instructive on this point. In 1699 a pamphlet entitled *A Short Account from, and Description of the Isthmus of Darien* included one of the first maps depicting the Scottish settlement of New Caledonia (see Figure 1).³ The site of the Scottish colony was marked out by two flags bearing the symbols of Scotland: thistle and Saltire. But the inset on the map provided more precise details about Caledonia: we see New Edinburgh, a fortified town on the tip of an isthmus which sits astride an “Excellent Harbour.”⁴ The message for the reader was unmistakable: not only has a colony been established, it is also prosperous and Scottish. The place was planted with the seeds of Scottish identity. Now we turn to the map from 1715, created by the Reverend Francis Borland, a settler who landed with the second expedition (see Figure 2).⁵ It ignored the broad geographic spaces covered in the map of 1699 and focused on the topography of Caledonia.

² Carter, 15-16.

³ Map found in *A Short Account from, and Description of the Isthmus of Darien, where the Scots Collony are Settled*, EEBO (1699). What is now known as the Isthmus of Panama was historically referred to as the Isthmus of Darien. Throughout this study references to the Darien will be a shorthand indication of the largely unpopulated southeastern province of Darien, part of modern day Panama. The present day province is 16,671 square kilometers of rugged and dramatic terrain. In the Darien, mangrove swamps, tropical riverine floodplains, and montane rainforest environments are set against the backdrop of the Serranía del Darién (better known as the Darién Range). This chain of mountains bisects the Darién province, creating Pacific and Atlantic regions. The colony of New Caledonia was located on the Atlantic side of this mountain chain. Ignacio Gallup-Díaz, “Introduction,” in *The Door of the Seas and Key to the Universe: Indian Politics and Imperial Rivalry in the Darien, 1640-1750* (Gutenberg<e>, Columbia University Press, 2001).

⁴ For another analysis, see Charles J. Withers, *Geography, Science and National Identity: Scotland since 1520* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 107.

⁵ Map found in Francis Borland, *Memoirs of Darien: Giving a Short Description of that Country*, ECCO (Glasgow, 1715), 7-8.



(8)
 See the following MAP of this NECK and Har-
 bour, with a Menary Explication thereof.

- a Shows the Me of Pines
 b Golden Island.
 c where the Spanish Fleet did rid.
 d Brandies Bay.
 e Adla the Greater.
 h CALLEDONIA Harbour and Rod.
 i The Lock out.
 k Mountains and Woods.
 l Rocks.
 m The Plantan Tree.
 n The Narrow Neck.
 o The Orange Grove
 p Indian Habitations.
 r Little Islands and Rocks.
 s Indian dwellings.
 t Acia the Lesser.
 v Mountains and Woods.
 w The watering place.
 u The Maccaw-Tree, full of prickles
 x The Orange-Tree.
 y The Fort.
 z The Cockernut-Tree.
 i The wild Cabage-Tree.
 c Caret-Bay river and Indians dwelling Westward
 us About this Bay, the Spaniards landed men against
 us.
- North.
 South.
 East.
 West.

Figure 2: Francis Borland's Map of New Caledonia

The differences between the two are striking: where the pamphlet map was carefully drawn and officious, this map was crude and almost childlike in the details it included. Borland tells us not only where Golden Island and the aboriginal settlement are found in comparison to Caledonia Harbour, but he also shows us where the Cabbage Tree was found and where the “Maccaw-Tree, full of prickles” was located.⁶ Borland's map highlighted the landmarks that were meaningful for resident Scots, bearing witness to the settlers' increasingly intimate relationship with a previously nameless and eventless physical environment.⁷ At the level of the everyday, the Scottish choice to frequent a particular “Cockernut Tree” or “watering place” endowed that location with special meaning in the world of Caledonians.⁸ But this settler history was fragile and could be shaken by events outside of Caledonian control. Thus, Borland noted the landing of hostile Spanish troops on the beaches behind the settlement (“R”). Although his map was but a picture of a place in transition, the foreign incursions recorded by Borland indicate the complexities of settler identities in the Darien. Scottish settlers attributed self-referential meaning to trees and rocks; but the violence of an unsettled colonial world meant that sometimes those meanings were forced upon them as well. These maps of Caledonia demonstrate that settlers, through their politics and their habits, made the minutiae of places speak loudly over time. Where explorers situated places according to shifting horizons, settlers discovered places within bounded horizons. This chapter examines the transition of a small portion of space in the Darien region into a place

⁶ Borland, 8.

⁷ I am speaking here of the Scots and only the Scots. The Darien Aborigines, the Spanish, and, as we shall see, the Buccaneers had their own mental maps of the Caledonia region, which existed before the Scots arrived. But the Scottish settlers of New Caledonia experienced the minutiae of this new landscape in a way which no amount of second hand knowledge could have prepared them for. The peculiarity of Borland's map is a perfect example of this acquisition of meaning in relation to Caledonian habits and histories.

⁸ Borland, *Memoirs of Darien*, 8.

known briefly as New Caledonia. It does so by focusing on the interaction of settlers with—and within—the natural environment.

There was no sturdy, monolithic identity for the ‘Scottish settler’ in the Darien. Sharp differences existed in the status, ethnicity, gender, occupation, religious fervor, and other characteristics of settlers. However, these Scots were forced to acquire a situational identity as significant as their overarching, but less tangible Scottish identity. In Catherine Hall’s words, “Settlers had to become colonisers.” They “had to learn how to define and manage the new world they were encountering...they were in the business of creating new societies, wrenching what they had found into something different.”⁹ For Scots in the Darien, the exotic flora and fauna of the untamed jungle was a constant reminder of the differences between the land of their birth and the Americas. Meaningful interaction with nature required an intellectual taming of its strange forms and the imaginative projection of its future uses. This translation occurred in descriptions of the landscape. Description imbued the physical world with European ideas about the purpose and value of the wilderness. These depictions in turn informed and influenced the behaviour of settlers who set out to seize and transform the colonial world. Yet settlers also had to wrench themselves into something different during their residence in the Americas. Scottish colonizers soon found that their preconceptions about the Darien did not always suit the contingencies of daily life in the jungle. These mystifying encounters with the wilderness created rifts in Caledonian society as settlers fought amongst themselves to apportion blame for their troubles. Some settlers, disenchanted by the prospects for long-term survival in the Darien, indicted the natural world, but others

⁹ Frantz Fanon summarized by Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 14.

blamed the Scots themselves by suggesting that they lacked the moral fibre to transform a hostile jungle into a pleasant oasis. To understand the responses of these Scottish settlers who became Caledonia's colonizers we must investigate the cultural and intellectual frameworks that informed their beliefs about the natural world. What were their hopes for the Darien region where they chose to settle? How did they imagine their colony would take shape, and what challenges did they face in pursuit of this dream? This chapter is a study of the challenges posed by the construction of an imagined landscape in an all too real world. I begin, however, with a much more basic question: How did the Scots learn about the Darien?

Scottish knowledge of the Darien came principally by way of William Paterson. He believed that opportunity waited for someone to settle in Darien; even a tenuous mastery of the Isthmus would grant its colonizers lucrative access to the Pacific and the riches of the Orient. When that opportunity was taken up Paterson envisioned that, "Trade will increase trade, money will beget money, and the trading world shall no more want work for their hand, but will rather want hands for their work." He positively beamed with the possibilities for the backers of such a colony: "this door of the seas, and key of the universe, with anything of a sort of reasonable management, will of course enable its proprietors to give laws to both oceans."¹⁰ His fervent advocacy of a settlement on the Isthmus imbued the landscape of the Darien with an aura of great economic promise.

Scots settlers and the Company of Scotland both looked upon the Isthmus and its access to the South Seas as their route to certain riches. The author of a *History of Caledonia* reported that "If it were possible to Cut a Channel from Sea to Sea, capable of

¹⁰ John Prebble, *The Darien Disaster* (London: Penguin, 1970), 21.

Shipping, it would facilitate the Navigation of the World two Parts in three.” “[B]ut,” he concluded sombrely, “it’s next to an impossibility, for it’s almost a continued Chain of Mountains, of which some are as high as any of the Alps.”¹¹ This disappointment, however, did not end the Scottish designs for the Pacific coast of the Isthmus. The Directors of the Company remained interested in the South Seas. On 18 August, 1699, they urged Caledonians to purchase land from the Tule, “not only on the north side where you are, but likewise, as soon as possible, on some convenient place on the south sea, for certain reasons of which you shall be acquainted in due time.”¹² In the imaginations of the Scots, the place was rife with possibility. It looked like the ideal place to begin an empire.

A great deal of Paterson's information about the Darien had been drawn from a travel account by Lionel Wafer, an intrepid buccaneer and surgeon. In July of 1696, Paterson had given the Directors of the Company of Scotland a collection of documents and maps relating to the Darien region, among these an unpublished manuscript of Wafer's travels across the Isthmus.¹³ This document was to be instrumental in the Scottish perception of the Darien. In the spring of 1698, the Directors finally arranged a secret meeting with Lionel Wafer.¹⁴ By this time the Directors had already decided to erect a plantation on the Isthmus. A pamphlet written by George Ridpath suggests that the text was more influential than the advice of the man: “they had a Manuscript of it [his

¹¹ A Gentleman Lately Arriv'd, *The History of Caledonia, or, The Scots Colony in Darien in the West Indies*, EEBO (London: 1699), 14.

¹² John Burton, “Dispatches and Letters from Directors to the Council at the Colony: Greenrock, 18th August 1699,” *The Darien Papers: Being a Selection of Original Letters and Official Documents Relating to the Establishment of a Colony at Darien by the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies, 1695-1700* (Edinburgh: T. Constable. 1849), 138.

¹³ Insh, “Introduction,” *Darien Shipping Papers*, x-xi.

¹⁴ For details of this meeting see, James Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien Including an Answer to the Defence of the Scots Settlement There*, EEBO (1700), 38-44.

book] before ever they saw him...and that to his no small surprize, they repeated several Passages out of it to him.”¹⁵

Lionel Wafer, possibly of Scottish heritage himself, published his definitive account of the Darien in 1699. It was entitled *A New Voyage and Description of the Isthmus of America*.¹⁶ This work was based on Wafer's experiences in the Darien, which were varied to say the least. In 1680 he crossed the Isthmus to take part in Bartholomew Sharpe's assault on Panama. A year later he attempted to return to the Caribbean through the Darien jungle. Wafer was badly injured and was forced to recuperate among the Tule people. He lived among them for four months before he escaped to the coast of the Darien region.¹⁷ Dressed as a Tule, Wafer made his way aboard a ship and happened to meet some of his fellow buccaneers. He said, “I was willing to try if they would know me in this Disguise; and ‘twas the better part of an Hour before one of the Crew, looking more narrowly upon me, cry’d out, Here's our Doctor.”¹⁸ His book offered the Company's Directors a detailed description of the landscape, the fauna, and the flora of the Darien through the eyes of an authority. The success of Wafer's “disguise” proved that he had become intimate with the landscape and the people in a way that few travelers of the time could rival.

John Prebble dramatizes the reception of Wafer's narrative in Edinburgh, enthusing that “the Directors of the Company were transported from the grey escarpment of Edinburgh...to what must have seemed a paradise, a rich and compliant land awaiting

¹⁵ George Ridpath, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Miscarriage of the Scots Colony at Darien, or an Answer to a Libel*, EEBO (Glasgow: 1700), 97.

¹⁶ James William Kelly, “Wafer, Lionel (d. 1705),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004).

¹⁷ Kelly, “Wafer, Lionel (d. 1705).”

¹⁸ Lionel Wafer, *A New Voyage and Description of the Isthmus of America, Giving an Account of the Author's Abode There*, EEBO (London: 1699), 42.

rape by Scots energy and Scots industry.”¹⁹ There is little doubt that Wafer painted a landscape teeming with possibility. “The variety of Beasts in this Country is not very great,” he suggested in his introduction of the animal life in the Darien, “but the Land is so fertile that upon clearing any considerable part of the Woods it would doubtless afford excellent Pasture, for the maintaining black Cattle, Swine, or whatever other Beasts ’tis usual to bring out of *Europe* into these Climates.”²⁰ Beauty and sustenance alike occupied his attention: “They have several sorts of Birds, some of Kinds unknown to us; and remarkable both for their Beauty, and the good Relish of their Flesh.”²¹ Wafer's eyes keenly noted what was promising about the landscape. In his description an appreciation for the aesthetic complemented, but did not take precedence over, evaluations of utility. In this way, Wafer's observations echoed the prevalent English belief that the wilderness of the new world was an Arcadia or Eden teeming with products that could be harnessed by aspiring colonists.²² Though perhaps not a guide to rape, as Prebble would suggest, there is little doubt that Wafer's appraisal convinced the directors of the material prospects of the Darien region.²³ It certainly seemed like a promising site for a Scottish colony.

¹⁹ Prebble, *The Darien Disaster*, 78.

²⁰ Wafer, *A New Voyage and Description of the Isthmus of America*, 104.

²¹ Wafer, 114.

²² This notion that the Americas were lands of unlimited resources figured prominently in the influential conservationist tract *Sylva* (1664) by the philosopher John Evelyn. Evelyn was keen to emphasize the forest saving benefits—for England—of re-locating timber-intensive iron mills to the Americas. As Richard Grove observes, Evelyn's belief that the Americas could be a new Holy Land, or an Arcadia for Europeans, was no obstacle to his exploitative belief that this “mentally unbounded and apparently inexhaustible Arcadia could provide an unlimited supply of raw materials.” Note the similarities between Evelyn's perception of the Americas and that of Wafer. The raw beauty of the untouched new world was inspiring because it also connoted the vast prospects for development by European settlers. Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 58.

²³ Wafer's influence was not limited to the Directors. In Robert Wodrow's “Queries for Caledonia Nova”—a series of questions about the Darien—the influence of Wafer's journal is unmistakable. Twice in this short document Wodrow directly asked Smith to verify if something was “as Wafer observes” or “as Wafer tells

For the Directors of the Company the true success of this new colony would be measured by the revenues it returned to Scotland's shores. Both Paterson and Wafer had indicated the tantalizing profits to be found beyond the shores of the Darien. During their meeting with Wafer, the directors were told of a hoard of Nicaraguan lumber which could be harvested at a great profit: "whereof 300 Men could cut down so much in Six Months, as should defray the whole Charge of the Expedition."²⁴ The Directors did not employ Wafer, but they did remember his promise of Nicaraguan lumber and instructed the first expedition to seek it out.²⁵ Wafer had told them that with some industry, settlers could clear land to support themselves and even hew down enough trees to pay for the cost of their expedition. With industry and common sense, Paterson had boasted, Scots could thrive in this land of plenty.

The claims made by Paterson and Wafer were convincing in part because they were in accord with widely held beliefs about the human relationship to the environment. Keith Thomas suggests that "agricultural improvement and exploitation were not just economically desirable; they were moral imperatives [during the Early Modern era]."²⁶ In 1691 the influential English naturalist John Ray presented improvement as an act encouraged by God. Speaking in His voice, Ray pronounced:

I have now placed thee in a spacious and well-furnish' World; I have endued thee with an Ability of understanding what is beautiful and proportionable, and have made that which is so, agreeable and delightful to thee; I have provided thee with

us." Robert Wodrow, *Early Letters of Robert Wodrow, 1698-1709*, ed. L.W. Sharp (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, 1937), 13, 14.

²⁴ Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien*, 41.

²⁵ Insh, "Captain Pennycook's Journall from the Madera Islands to New Caledonia in Darien," *Darien Shipping Papers*, 78.

²⁶ Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England, 1500-1800* (London: Allen Lane, 1983), 255.

Materials whereon to exercise and employ thy Art and Strength; I have given thee an excellent Instrument, the Hand, accommodated to make use of them all.²⁷

Ray brashly summarized a widely held belief that the Earth was an unfinished object that God had intended man to improve to perfection.²⁸ John Locke had represented the relationship between man and God in similar terms in 1690 when he declared that “God and his reason commanded him [man] to subdue the earth—*i.e.* improve it for the benefit of life.”²⁹ The consensus among Early Modern Scots and English alike was that “[t]he cultivation of soil was a symbol of civilization, whereas ‘wild and vacant lands’, ‘encumbered with bushes [and] briars’, were like a ‘deformed chaos.’”³⁰

These seventeenth-century thinkers on the human/nature relationship followed in the footsteps of Francis Bacon. He believed that mankind did not have to passively accept the restrictions of the natural world; rather nature could be investigated allowing man to gain the knowledge which would allow for nature's manipulation.³¹ This belief in the human capacity to change nature was the basis for *The Great Instauration* (1620). This work was an elaborate argument against classical philosophy that called for the re-imagination of human thinking along inductive lines. In it Bacon proposed that detailed natural histories would form the fundamental basis for the new natural philosophy.³² They would provide the specific details that would allow for induction from specific instances to axioms. Bacon endorsed the empirical study of nature because he believed it

²⁷ Clarence J. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought From Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 483.

²⁸ Glacken, 483.

²⁹ James P. Sterba, ed., *Social and Political Philosophy: Classical Texts in Feminist and Multicultural Perspectives*, (Toronto: Nelson Thomson Learning, 2003), 192.

³⁰ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 255.

³¹ Perez Zagorin, *Francis Bacon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 78.

³² Zagorin, 74-75, 103.

was a precondition for its mastery.³³ In this respect, he believed earlier natural histories had been misguided and shackled by their attention to “superficial description.”³⁴ Baconian natural history was to differ from earlier practices in its “systematic” approach and holistic perspective. The ideal observer would not only be required to engage in the “minute investigation of generation and change” but would also be expected to be familiar with climatic theories *and* have the ability to examine a range of natural phenomena from mountains to tides.³⁵

An early and influential example of Baconian natural history was Gerard Boate's *Ireland's Natural History* (1652). This work offered a general description of Ireland's natural resources. It was characterized by simple language and a sparing reliance on quotations from outside authorities (including Bacon). The body of the work was prefaced by a short description of the region.³⁶ Information for his natural history was garnered primarily through informants from Ireland, including his brother Arnold Boate.³⁷ Although Gerard Boate passed away before he could finish his work, Arnold attempted to continue it by distributing *An Interrogatory Relating more particularly to the Husbandry and Natural History of Ireland*. This detailed questionnaire probed for details about Ireland's fauna, flora, and farming practices. It was widely circulated and was the first natural history questionnaire to be published in England.³⁸ The questionnaire became a popular way for the practitioners of Baconian natural history to gather

³³ Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, 475. See also, Zagorin, 89.

³⁴ Charles Webster, *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform 1626-1660* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 420.

³⁵ Webster, 420.

³⁶ Webster, 429.

³⁷ Webster, 429.

³⁸ Webster, 431.

information from distant locales.³⁹ In general, Gerard Boate's *History* was a watershed in the practice of natural history. To some extent, it redirected the overtly scientific aspirations of Baconian natural history by focusing on the more immediate economic benefits that would accrue to those who could master nature. In Ireland, Boate's work was encouraged by Baconians involved in the army and civil service. They wished “to demonstrate their worth by promoting a planned exploitation of the province.”⁴⁰ His history was intended as “a prelude to improvement by and for Protestant settlers.”⁴¹ The early English (and Scottish) colonial activities in Ireland served as a basis for cementing the exploitative relationship between the new natural history, improvement, and colonialism.⁴² During the mid-1650s, Sir William Petty implemented Boate's economic geography in the “Down Survey”—the first large-scale land survey that strived for scientific rigor in its measurements. Petty's “quantification of the original natural history” was widely lauded and brought Boate, as well as the pragmatic advantages of his methods, to intellectual attention.⁴³

During the late seventeenth century two of Scotland's leading scientific figures—Sir Robert Sibbald and Robert Wodrow—practiced Baconian natural history. Sir Robert Sibbald was appointed as Physician to the King and Geographer Royal in 1682 and spent much of his life trying to gather information for a Natural History of Scotland. “Natural history was,” he believed, “closely related to the improving concerns of enlightened

³⁹ The eminent Scot Sir Robert Sibbald also used questionnaires to gather information. See Withers, *Geography, Science and National Identity*, 78.

⁴⁰ Webster, *The Great Instauration*, 428.

⁴¹ Elizabeth Baigent, “Boate, Gerard (1604–1650),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004).

⁴² For a recent analysis of Scottish involvement in Ulster, especially as an outlet of colonialism, see David Armitage, “Making the Empire British: Scotland in the Atlantic World, 1542–1707,” *Past and Present* 155 (1997).

⁴³ Webster, *The Great Instauration*, 434.

Scots...it was likely to be of direct benefit to the kingdom and to the individuals who engaged in it.”⁴⁴ When the Scots decided to venture to the Darien, Sibbald engaged the younger James Wallace to be his correspondent on the first expedition.⁴⁵ Wallace himself was an experienced natural historian and had published a natural history entitled *A Description of the Isles of Orkney* in 1693.⁴⁶

Sibbald's colleague Robert Wodrow was similarly engaged in a natural history of Scotland. He drew on a wide range of correspondents to build a model of Scotland's natural and geographical world.⁴⁷ Wodrow's curiosity extended to the newly colonized Darien region. He sent Patrick Smith, a settler on the second Scottish expedition, to the Darien with a detailed questionnaire.⁴⁸ *Queries for Caledonia Nova* reflected Wodrow's Baconian curiosity about the workings of nature. In four pages, Wodrow inquired about a broad range of subjects including the weather, the pattern of tides, the presence of gold and the aboriginal ways for collecting it, the types of animals, the fertility of the ground and finally the language, religion and government of the Aboriginal peoples. Wodrow's curiosity was systematic and holistic, just as Bacon had desired of natural historians in the *Great Instauration*. Many of Wodrow's questions established the existence of a phenomenon, and then instructed the observer to make more detailed comments or measurements. For example, after he asked for a description of the aboriginal method of removing gold from the river, he further instructed the correspondent to observe “in qhat

⁴⁴ Roger Emerson, “Sir Robert Sibbald, Kt, the Royal Society of Scotland and the Origins of the Scottish Enlightenment,” *Annals of Science* 45 (1988): 63.

⁴⁵ Withers, *Geography, Science and National Identity*, 106.

⁴⁶ Withers, 81.

⁴⁷ Withers, 86.

⁴⁸ Wodrow was accustomed to such questionnaires, as he used them to expand his collection of information about the Scottish highlands and its curiosities. Withers, 86.

quantity and of quhat purity it is.”⁴⁹ Wodrow wanted to know how the Scots might live and prosper in the new land they had settled. The Baconian belief that observing the natural world was a prerequisite for improving the human condition seemed beyond reproach to these Scottish intellectuals.

For anyone seeking to understand the encounter of the old world with the new, it is important to recognize that descriptions of the new world mirrored deeply held ideological beliefs about the natural world. During the late seventeenth century, Baconian thought reigned as a powerful cultural force dictating the proper uses of the environment. The intellectual and moral lights of this era, such as John Locke, legitimized and endorsed improvement especially in their portrayals of a world *ordained* for human management. As a result, the Scots who established New Caledonia believed unreservedly in the virtues of Baconian improvement as a stratagem for taming the land. It was not a coincidence that the flagship of the first expedition, the *St. Andrew*, had originally been christened the *Instauration*.⁵⁰ For the Scots, the utility and value of the Darien region was assessed through its suitability for improvement. As an ideology informing descriptive accounts, improvement was essential to the production of the New Caledonia as a fertile region awaiting Scottish development and plantation. During the Scottish tenure in the Darien, it both guided and facilitated possession of the land.

The Company of Scotland did not simply instruct its settlers to find a suitable site and ‘set up shop.’ Before the *Unicorn*, *Caledonia* and *St. Andrew* were dispatched from Scotland they were given sailing orders that directed them to settle beside the Bay of

⁴⁹ Wodrow, *Early Letters of Robert Wodrow*, 15.

⁵⁰ Insh, *Darien Shipping Papers*, 59.

Darien, on Golden Island and the mainland.⁵¹ What might have enticed the directors to pick this location? The island had inestimable symbolic value as the base from which Wafer and his fellow buccaneers had begun their march on Panama in 1680.⁵² While this was an important consideration for Scots looking to replicate the buccaneers' success, it seems more probable that Golden Island was valued as an eminently defensible and agriculturally productive location. A summary of Wafer's journal by the Company's secretary, Roderick Mackenzie, observed that Golden Island was "without Comparison the best place on all this Side of the Isthmus whereon to make a fortress to secure trade or a passage overland."⁵³ The following is an extract from Wafer's book describing the Island:

Golden Island...a small one with a fair deep channel between it and the Main. It is rocky and steep all round to the Sea, (and thereby naturally fortified) excepting only the Landing- place, which is a small Sandy Bay on the South side, towards the Harbour, from whence it gently rises. It is moderately high, and cover'd with small Trees or Shrubs. The Land of the *Isthmus* opposite to it to the South East, is excellent fruitful Land, of a black Mold.⁵⁴

Two factors stand out in this description. The island was "naturally fortified" and in close proximity to fertile land. The sailing orders which directed the Scots to divide their small settlement force between the mainland and the island—certainly a risky move for a new colony in the heart of Spanish territory—testify to the overwhelming importance of both factors for a new colony. The Scottish Directors wanted the settlers to establish a claim to

⁵¹ Insh, "Sailing Orders," *Darien Shipping Papers*, 64-65.

⁵² Wafer, *A New Voyage and Description of the Isthmus of America*, 54.

⁵³ Insh asserts that the handwriting of the summary "bears a strong resemblance" to that of the secretary. "A Short Description of the heads of my journal concerning the Isthmus of Darien," *Darien Shipping Papers*, 53. In 1697 the English Commissioners of Trade and Plantations came to a similar conclusion after they interviewed Lionel Wafer and his friend Captain William Dampier. They concluded: "That a Competent number of Men be sent either from hence or from Jamaica to take possession of that Port and Island for the Crown of England." Insh, "Whitehall, September the 10th 1697: At a meeting of his Majestys Commissioners for Trade and Plantations," *Darien Shipping Papers*, 50.

⁵⁴ Wafer, *A New Voyage and Description of the Isthmus of America*, 54.

both areas by occupying them because, in their estimation, a colonial venture could not succeed without a defensible position and places for prospective improvement.

And yet the Council of Caledonia ultimately rejected Golden Island as a site for the new Scottish colony, precisely because it was believed to be indefensible. The journal of Captain Robert Pennycook—a counsellor for the first colony and the commodore for the Scottish fleet dispatched to the Isthmus—offers some light on this issue.⁵⁵ On 27 October, 1698: “[W]e went in our Boats to sound all about the Golden Island, which we did with great Exactnesse, but found it not convenient for our Shipps: There is room enough near the Island; but their we might be attack’d by the greatest Shipps either from East or West.”⁵⁶ Sounding was repeated several days later some four miles east of Golden Island with far more encouraging results: “[we] found it a most Excellent Harbour.”⁵⁷ The Scots now proposed to shift their colony entirely to the mainland. The new site they had chosen was praised for its natural defences, which were believed to be resistant to threats posed by man and nature: “And here you ly Landlockt every way, that noe wind can possibly hurt you...nor can any hurricane make the Least Sea...the Land on the Left hand comeing in is a Peninsula, and about a mile and a halfe Long, very Steep and high, where it would be Difficult for any body to Land.”⁵⁸ With its array of natural defences and limited points of entry—sufficient to warrant later description as a “crabbed hold”—this place possessed clear advantages over Golden Island.⁵⁹ These advantages were built

⁵⁵ It was the document that the Council's secretary Hugh Rose reproduced as an official diary for presentation to the Directors of the Company in Scotland.

⁵⁶ Insh, “Captain Pennycook's Journall from the Madera Islands to New Caledonia in Darien,” *Darien Shipping Papers*, 80.

⁵⁷ Insh, 81.

⁵⁸ Insh, 82.

⁵⁹ Crabbed, in this usage, referred to the rough terrain of the isthmus. The cliffs which protected the peninsula from attacks from the ocean were complemented by the thick rainforest which surrounded the colony. These factors lent the colony an aura of impenetrability. Crabbed is defined by the OED as: “Of land,

upon in Pennycook's imaginative assessment of the harbour's potential. His narrative appraised the landscape and suggested that the only landward entry to the isthmus was at its base, "but this by a good Ditch and Fort may easily be secur'd."⁶⁰ The harbour entrance could also be easily protected with a battery on either shore. Improvability, at least in its modest beginnings, was subject to the prior constraints of defence.

Defensive concerns also preceded initial appraisals of the landscape in the journal of the younger James Wallace. But not, in terms of the text, for a significant period of time: "In short it [Caledonia Bay] may be made impregnable, and there is bounds enough within it, if it were all cultivated, to afford 10, 000 Hogsheads of Sugar every year."⁶¹ As Wallace's description continued, his excitement intensified: "The Soil is Rich, the Air is good and temperate, the Water is Sweet, and everything contributes to make it healthful and convenient. The Product of this place, I mean, in the Harbour and Creek hereabouts is Turtle Manatee, and vast variety of very good small fish."⁶² Wallace, whose links with Baconian natural history I have discussed, confidently categorized the animal life in the Darien as "Product." This label was given especially to animals that could be used to feed the Scots. Wallace thereby implied that the Darien could support the Scots, if the Scots were willing to industriously pursue nature's products. Overall, Wallace's appraisal of the Caledonian landscape was glowing. His description not only emphasized the importance of good defensive prospects for a colony, it also looked to the future as it extolled the

weather, etc.: Rough, rugged." "Crabbed, 5c," *The Oxford English Dictionary: OED Online* (Oxford University Press, 1989). Here is the full quote, made by Captain Long, an English observer: "About 1200 men landed ashore as proper as I ever saw. They are very healthy, and in such a crabbed hold that it will be difficult to beat them out of it." Burton, "Captain Long's Letter from Jamaica, concerning the Scots settling in Caledonia, 1699," *The Darien Papers*, 82.

⁶⁰ Insh, "Captain Pennycook's Journall," *Darien Shipping Papers*, 82.

⁶¹ Insh, "A Journal kept from Scotland by one of the Company who sailed on board the 'Endeavor' pink; with a short account of Darien," *Darien Shipping Papers*, 74.

⁶² Insh, *Darien Shipping Papers*, 74.

lucrative uses of this fertile region. With work it could be an excellent base for a Scottish colony.

Wallace's projections about the crops which Caledonia would support were based on little experience in the Darien's natural environment. But they are important because they symbolize the bringing together of fertility and commercial potential. Pennycook also saw the promise of the productive land around him. His excitement gained commercial implications when it was translated into his exuberant exaggeration of the size of Caledonia Bay: "This Harbour is capable of containing a 1000 sail of the best Shippes in the World. And without great trouble Wharfs may be run out, to which Shippes of the greatest Burthen may lay their sides and unload."⁶³ In a letter home, Paterson enthused, "The Country is Healthfull to a wonder."⁶⁴ He extolled the unparalleled virtues of the Darien: "If Merchants should once Erect Factories here, this place will become the best and surest Mart in all *America*, both for In-land and Over-land Trade."⁶⁵ The Scots who first landed in the Darien were blinded by their expectations of a rich and bountiful land. Metaphorically, they saw tall stands of Nicaraguan lumber everywhere they looked. A pamphlet from 1699, written by an anonymous Caledonian, was emphatic in its optimism about the Darien landscape: "It's capable of any improvement."⁶⁶

Improvement, as we have seen, was consistently mobilized as a colonial discourse by the Scots who established New Caledonia. Peter Hulme defines colonial discourse as "an ensemble of linguistically-based practices unified by their common deployment in

⁶³ Insh, "Captain Pennycook's Journall," *Darien Shipping Papers*, 82.

⁶⁴ William Paterson, *An Abstract of a Letter from a Person of Eminency and Worth in Caledonia to a Friend at Boston in New England*, EEBO (Boston: May 15th, 1699), 1.

⁶⁵ Paterson, 2.

⁶⁶ A Gentleman Lately Arriv'd, *The History of Caledonia*, 16.

the management of colonial relationships.”⁶⁷ Yet the language of improvement, although shared, was deployed in varying ways and to varying degrees by Scots who brought “their own particular dynamics”—occupation, social status, gender, and so on—to the colonial discourse.⁶⁸ For example, Pennycook and Wallace shared an elevated social status which isolated them from everyday concerns. Their descriptions of the Darien reflected this prejudice. Pennycook and Wallace dealt first with the defensive potential of the new colony and then quickly moved to discuss the fertility of Caledonia. Another critical element in their narratives was the description and management of their relationship with the Tule.⁶⁹ In short, their focus was on establishment—on “tak[ing] possession of the place in the Company's name...*there to build, plant, and fortify.*”⁷⁰ Improvement, as these Scots saw it, was a long-term process dependent on the fortification of land, the harvesting of European crops, and the creation of alliances with the local Aboriginal peoples. Success would be measured by these same standards.

Access to food was a divisive issue. It marked the boundaries of social status, but it also affected the deployment of the colonial discourse of improvement we have been discussing.⁷¹ Antonello Gerbi, studying much earlier Spanish interactions with the new world, argued that “[colonists’] first investigations were...necessarily directed towards ascertaining whether it was possible to ‘live off the land’...The utilitarian-nutritional viewpoint was bound to take precedence over purely naturalistic research.”⁷² Neither

⁶⁷ Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean 1492-1797* (New York: Methuen, 1986), 2.

⁶⁸ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, 15.

⁶⁹ Both narratives spent time discussing the relationship with the Aboriginals. Insh, “A Journal kept from Scotland,” *Darien Shipping Papers*, 75-77. And Insh, “Captain Pennycook’s Journal,” 83-88.

⁷⁰ Emphasis is mine. Burton, “Instructions to the council of the Colony: 12 July, 1698,” 54.

⁷¹ See Chapter three for further analysis of the status divisions occasioned by food supplies.

⁷² Antonello Gerbi, *Nature in the New World: From Christopher Columbus to Gonzalo Fernàndez de Oviedo*, trans. Jeremy Moyle (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), 278.

Wallace nor Pennycook discussed issues of food during the first weeks of settlement.⁷³

The diary of James Wallace suggests he was unconcerned about dietary issues during the first days of New Caledonia. In his 4 November entry, the date of the first landing in Caledonia, Wallace worried about being unable to collect specimens of all the plants he found, “because if I should gather all, ‘twould be enough to load the St. Andrew.”⁷⁴

Theirs was a long-term approach which reflected their privileged social position and was not troubled by mundane daily concerns such as how to find food.

Meanwhile, an anonymous journal kept about the early days of the first Darien settlement offered a different perspective, likely reflecting the concerns of a settler of lower social status.⁷⁵ According to the journal, on Monday, 7 November, a group of officers and soldiers from the three ships were sent ashore to clear land. The entry for 8-10 November indicated that these labouring settlers were as intent on gathering country produce as they were on work: “We continue all still at work, and we sometimes kill turkeys and other fowlls, and monxies, which are very good meat. The natives bring in plantines and other fruits. We begin to catch some fish.”⁷⁶ The immediate concern for settlers in this new environment was not simply clearing land for settlement, but also the discovery of new food sources. Moreover, where Pennycook utilized diplomacy to forge

⁷³ See Insh, “A Journal kept from Scotland,” *Darien Shipping Papers*, 75-77. Insh, “Captain Pennycook’s Journall,” 83-88.

⁷⁴ Insh, “A Journal kept from Scotland,” *Darien Shipping Papers*, 75.

⁷⁵ It is difficult to deduce status from the writing of the letter. Several factors that suggest to me that it was written by a Planter include the fact that: (1) unlike most other records from the Darien colony, deaths of expedition members of high and low status are recorded; (2) unlike other journals, this one does not seem to have any certain knowledge of the final destination. Arrival at Crab Island, and then Golden Island, are not portrayed as the successful completion of a journey. In fact, Golden Island is referred to as “a pretty little island, called Gold Island, about two leagues from the bay, in our way as we past.” James Maidment, ed., “Journal of the Scots, African, and Indian Fleet, From the Setting Forth From Kilcaldy, 8th July 1698, to the Arrival at the Bay of Darien, 1st November, 1699,” *Analecta Scotica: Collections Illustrative of the Civil, Ecclesiastical, and Literary History of Scotland* (Edinburgh: T.G. Stevenson, 1834), 360-361.

⁷⁶ Maidment, “Journal of the Scots, African, and Indian Fleet,” 361.

relationships with the Tule, these Scots increased their intimacy with the aboriginals during the daily trade of goods.⁷⁷

Despite these differences, Scottish settlers of all sorts had a vested interest in the success of the Darien venture. All the settlers had been promised fifty acres of land in Caledonia, so clearing the land—working for a stable colony—was in their interest.⁷⁸ The appeal of improvement—as economic development of the landscape—likely cut across social rank since it ensured quicker access to the land promised to the Scots settlers. But the energy and time settlers spent worrying about food stuffs suggest that improvement was an important, but not exclusive, concern for settlers with stomachs to fill. Success of the Scottish colony was likely measured somewhat differently for such settlers. The pressing issue was sustaining themselves in a new land, rather than looking to build “a new Amsterdam, Venice or Tyre.”⁷⁹ Nevertheless, their views should not be divorced from the grand project of improvement envisioned by the leaders of the colony, such as Pennycook. The Directors of the Company were emphatic that the land cleared in the Darien should be distributed equally so it could be put to the most efficient use possible: “to the end that what is taken up may be the better cultivated and may not be engross’d by a few to the discouragement of other industrious people.”⁸⁰ The project of settlement was to be managed by the colony's leaders so that every acre cleared would be planted.

⁷⁷ See Chapter three for an exploration of the food trade between the Scots and the Tule.

⁷⁸ An advertisement posted on March 12th, 1698 announced the rewards and obligations of settlement: “Everyone who goes on the first expedition shall receive and possess fifty acres of plantable land, and 50 foot square of ground at least in the chief city or town, and an ordinary house built thereupon by the colony at the end of 3 years. Every Councillor shall have double.” Prebble, *The Darien Disaster*, 111.

⁷⁹ Thomas Macaulay, *The History of England From the Accession of James the Second: Volume V* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861), 231.

⁸⁰ Insh, “Instructions from the Council-General of the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies,” *Darien Shipping Papers*, 12

The ideal settler would contribute to the larger goal set out by Wallace: 10, 000 hogshead of sugar farmed for the benefit of Scotland.

Transferring the improvement discourse to the new world would not have been possible unless Early-Moderns saw some affinity between nature in the new world and the old. It is important, then, that both Wallace's records and the anonymous journal account tried to come to terms with American nature by drawing comparisons to European wildlife. Wallace made the botanical pronouncement that "[t]his place affords legion of monstrous plants, enough to confound all the methods of Botany hitherto thought upon." But this observation was quickly followed by another: "besides these Monsters reduceable to no tribe, there are here a great many of the European kindred (but still something odd about them)."⁸¹ Likewise, the anonymous journal described types of fish found in the Darien by comparing them to what was known in the old world: "Many of these fishes are shapt like our perches, bot larger and narrow-tailed like a makrill."⁸² Again, it is important to consider the early Spanish reaction to the phenomenon of the new world. Gerbi comments that:

Faced with a nature still unknown but indispensable, the Spaniard sought to tame it with the tools in his possession, sought to reduce it to his own norms, to comprehend it and compare it with the familiar nature of Europe so as to be able to make better use of it. The cognitive motive led to accentuation of the substantial affinities between American nature and the nature of the Old World.⁸³

This way of approaching the new world was not uniquely Spanish, and was widely followed during the seventeenth century.

Michael T. Ryan argues that one way in which the old world coped with the New during the seventeenth century was through assimilation. "The assimilation of new

⁸¹ Insh, "A Journal kept from Scotland," *Darien Shipping Papers*, 75.

⁸² Maidment, "Journal of the Scots, African, and Indian Fleet," 363.

⁸³ Gerbi, *Nature in the New World*, 279.

worlds,” argues Ryan, “involved their domestication...[and] the process of assimilation tended to rob them of their difference and blunt the force of their impact.”⁸⁴ Such a process was vital for the Scots who arrived to the strange and exotic landscapes of the new world. It is clear that even at the end of the seventeenth century there was uncertainty—not to mention discomfort—about the wild things of the Americas. In his questionnaire for the Caledonians, Robert Wodrow asked “whither, as some relate, in the passage of the isthmus from Nombre de Dios to Panama there be a whole wood-full of sensitive treas, of quich as soon as touched the leaves and branches move with a ratling noise, and wind themselves into a winding figure.” Wodrow also wondered, drawing on Wafer's description, if there was an “aple tree” that could poison not only by eating, but through its shade and its scent.⁸⁵ I bring up these examples to suggest that even at the end of the seventeenth century, even in what was a relatively closely explored region of the Americas, places were still ‘dark with horizons.’ But Wodrow was not overwhelmed by these curiosities, for he also wondered about the similarities between the old and new worlds. He asked if the language of the aboriginals was like Irish or Highland Gaelic. He also asked if any rivers exists which flood “like Nile, Niger or Indus.”⁸⁶ Early Modern Scots settlers approached their dark horizons looking for similarities to the world of their upbringing. In this way they hoped to lessen the mysterious power of the new and the novel, and to stress the power of the known and the familiar.

⁸⁴ Michael T. Ryan, “Assimilating New Worlds in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” *Journal of Comparative Studies in Society and History* (1981): 523.

⁸⁵ Wodrow, *Early Letters of Robert Wodrow*, 14.

⁸⁶ Wodrow, 13, 14. For contextualization of Wodrow's ideas see Roger Emerson, “The Scottish Literati and America, 1680-1800,” in *Nation and Province in the First British Empire: Scotland and the Americas, 1600-1800*, ed. Ned C. Landsman (Lewisburgh: Bucknell University Press, 2001), 189.

Not all objects could be assimilated to the same degree. Bernard McGrane contends that Christianity played an indispensable role in defining European cosmography in the sixteenth century. The wilderness of the Americas was widely perceived as threatening; in a poetic rendering of this belief McGrane writes that “nature is not natural...but rather ‘fallen,’ ‘demonical’...an essentially limitless darkness.”⁸⁷ In the seventeenth century, knowledge about and experience in the Darien landscape lent Scots accounts of the natural world more complexity. McGrane's vast darkness was qualified and pushed back in Scottish accounts by the practice of establishing similarity through utility. In this way, the exotic flora, the fauna, and the landscape could be differentiated by the Scots into a catalogue of “Products” to be harnessed. Consider, once more, Wodrow's queries. He asks Smith to determine if there are “good hopes” of finding minerals in the mountains; he urges him to investigate “if any treas ther be fit for the building of shippes”; and he wonders “[i]f the ground with you has been tryed with European grain as wheat, corn, pease, & with quhat success.”⁸⁸ Pennycook comments briefly that Darien is full of cedars, yellow sanders, and the not-so-mythical apple tree described by Wodrow, “which is very good for inlaying.”⁸⁹ In each case, the similarity of objects was measured and judged by their ability to be used in known ways. This utility-conscious approach partially assimilated the new world, and it helped in a qualified intellectual domestication of the exotic nature of the Darien.

⁸⁷ Bernard McGrane, *Beyond Anthropology: Society and the Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 16. Roger Emerson argues that until the late seventeenth century this view of the Americas predominated among Scots. It was grounded in a disinterest in the new world reinforced by “the burden” of a classic education with a heavy religious bent. As late as 1655 Alexander Ross confidently portrayed the new world as a land of Satanic Indians amidst “a howling Wilderness.” Emerson, *The Scottish Literati*, 184.

⁸⁸ Wodrow, *Early Letters of Robert Wodrow*, 12,13,15.

⁸⁹ Insh, “Captain Pennycook’s Journall,” *Darien Shipping Papers*, 82.

Further evidence of this approach to nature is found in *The History of Caledonia* (1699). The pamphlet offered a striking description of the Darien forest:

These Hills are Clothed with tall Trees without any underwood, so that one may gallop conveniently among them, many miles free from Sun and Rain...The Air makes on the tops of the Trees a pleasant Melancholly Musick, so that one of the Colony considering the Coolness, Pleasant Murmuring of the Air and the infinite beauty of a continued Natural Arbor, called them the shades of Love.⁹⁰

The above passage reflected the intellectual landscaping of the forest as a domesticated grove, familiar to the leisured European and friendly to their intentions and interactions. Notably, this passage occurred on the very same page as the comment that the landscape of Caledonia was capable of any improvement. The passage was a restatement of John Ray's belief that men could appreciate the beauty of the world and bring it to perfection through careful management and grooming. The idyllic forest described in this pamphlet was virtually cultivated; it was *almost* free of the uncivilized barriers that might impede human traffic in the forest. This preference for an aesthetically pleasing forest reflected a changing relationship with the forest in England, and presumably Scotland.⁹¹ Yet all was not perfect, and a few paragraphs later places are mentioned near the shore where swampland dominates the wilderness. Here the trees formed a "thicket" that was "very troublesome to Travellers."⁹² The pamphlet communicated the evident need for Scottish settlers as improvers, by suggesting that the forest still held some latent threat to their well-being.

The assimilation of nature was a progressive affair which relied upon the stratification of differences, and these stratifications roughly accorded to value judgments

⁹⁰ A Gentleman Lately Arriv'd, *The History of Caledonia*, 16.

⁹¹ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 204-212. See his comment on the culmination of this process on page 209. "Trees had ceased to be a symbol of barbarism or a mere economic commodity. They had become an indispensable part of the scenery of upper-class life."

⁹² A Gentleman Lately Arriv'd, *The History of Caledonia*, 17.

about utility. The exoticism of the untouched equatorial forest was tempered by its recognized utility as a covered highway. The morass which hugged the shoreline, having no clear purpose, acquired a distasteful, troublesome character. But neither landscape was truly acceptable. For even where the Scots doted on the Darien's fertile environment, they judged it less than perfect for human habitation. Hector Mackenzie, a settler on the first expedition, observed that the Darien was well watered and covered "with almost incredible quantities of large straight well grown timber...which by unanimous consent is taken for a testimony of fertility wheresoever it is found."⁹³ But Mackenzie added a caveat to this appraisal. "[We] have no reason to doubt that the Situation of the place will be delightfull and pleasant enough [sic], *whenever the ground is cleared and regularly planted.*"⁹⁴ In part, Mackenzie was participating in a larger European discourse which questioned the fertility and healthiness of forested landscapes. In his 1664 work *Sylva*, the philosopher John Evelyn wrote of the unqualified benefits which clearing had brought to Irish and American lands. The land, Evelyn believed, had been "much improved by felling and clearing those spacious shades and letting in the air and sun and making the earth fit for tillage and pasturage [so] that these gloomy tracts are now healthy and habitable."⁹⁵ Accordingly, it seems that even the well behaved nature that the Scots found around New Caledonia needed radical human stewardship.

"Men," it was thought during the seventeenth century, "must actively interfere with brute nature...in order to maintain civilization. Nature untouched by man is a lesser nature and the economy of nature is best where man actively superintends it."⁹⁶ This

⁹³ Insh, "Hector Mackenzie to Mr. Haldane of Gleneagles," *Darien Shipping Papers*, 80.

⁹⁴ Italics mine. Insh, "Hector Mackenzie to Mr. Haldane of Gleneagles," *Darien Shipping Papers*, 80.

⁹⁵ Grove, *Green Imperialism*, 58.

⁹⁶ Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, 482.

observation brings us to an important question. The ambiguity that marked Scottish evaluations of nature suggests an irreconcilable discomfort at the thought of humanity living in an unmanaged wild space. But if all humans were supposed to be ‘superintendents’ of nature, what were Scots to think of those who failed in this role? The prevailing consensus was that those who failed to improve the land were vulgar and uncultured. After all, to the Scots and the English, improvement was a statement of civilization and a duty performed for God.⁹⁷

A concise example of this belief can be found in the colonial natural history of Gerard Boate discussed earlier. Boate's *Ireland's Naturall History* denigrated the native Irish for their failure to improve the landscape. Significantly, these attacks on the Irish were usually accompanied by an instance of English improvement. For example, he argued that Irish land developed by English cultivation was populated by farm animals until it resembled the best parts of Europe. When the English were driven out by native Irish rebellion, Boate believed that the land fell back into disarray: “those barbarians, the naturall inhabitants of Ireland...endeavored quite to extinguish the memory of them [the English], and of all the civility and good things by them introduced amongst that wild Nation.”⁹⁸ Boate's work was a model of the ways natural history and improvement could mingle with the project of colonialism to legitimate the exploitation of indigenous land by Europeans.

The discourse of improvement opened the door for acts of possession. It not only suggested their possibility by imagining uses for the landscape, but by positing man as

⁹⁷ Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, 483.

⁹⁸ Gerard Boate, *Ireland's Naturall History Being a True and Ample Description of its Situation, Greatness, Shape, and Nature, of its Hills, Woods, Heaths, Bogs, of its Fruitfull parts, and Profitable Grounds : with the Severall Ways of Manuring and Improving the Same*, EEBO (London: 1657), 89.

‘superintendent,’ it legitimized the Scottish act of possession as natural and necessary. The letter of George Moffat, written in New York on 12 August, 1699, relayed striking commentary from the leading members of the first Scottish expedition to the Darien. Moffat, a Scot, encountered his fellow “Countrymen” outside of New York, after they had fled from the colony under the duress of famine and disease. His letter conveyed disgust at the mismanagement that had required the settlers to abandon Caledonia. He described the natural advantages of the place, but in a way that subtly established Scottish superiority over the local Tule.⁹⁹ He said that Thomas and Robert Drummond, along with Captain Vetch (all counsellors), told him:

that sugars grow there, but the natives have no mills, neither doe they know the use therof, only sweeten their drink with the juice of the cain, which is the reason why so little is planted; likeways, that ye gold dust may be discerned there in quantitys in their small rivers.¹⁰⁰

Moffat insinuated that the Darien was teeming with undeveloped riches. The native people, who lacked the technology to capitalize on the natural wealth which lay all about them, required instruction and the aid of Scots improvers to bring their land to its full potential. The theoretical concept of “Other-as-Child,” as defined by Bernard McGrane, helps to explain Moffat’s comments. “The Other is inferior to the European,” according to McGrane’s analysis, “because he is not capable of having a responsible relationship with this gold [or in the Darien, sugar-cane *and* gold] that surrounds him, and hence European appropriation is justified.”¹⁰¹ The responsible use of nature was a loaded concept. In the sixteenth century it meant “commercial exploitation”—that is, itinerant travel guided by the promise of short-term profit, usually in gold or silver. But among

⁹⁹ Possibly in an attempt to encourage the Scots to return to Darien.

¹⁰⁰ Burton, “Letters—George Moffat to Messr. Joseph Ormston, Alexander Hamilton, and Company,” 144, 146.

¹⁰¹ McGrane, *Beyond Anthropology*, 25.

Scots in the seventeenth century it meant long-term possession and development through intensive farming and clearing, processes that ensured the continual production of wealth. The Scots believed the latter was something the Aborigines had not undertaken.¹⁰²

Because exploitation had to be justified, at least discursively, the success or failure of improvement could be judged by the manner in which acts of possession were executed. Fortunately for the historian, the key elements of successful possession were outlined in a letter to the Council of the first colony from the Directors of the Company:

[Y]ou must not neglect, wherever you go within the bounds allowed by the said Act of Parliament, to take legal possessions by cutting of timber, building of hutts, and ordering some Natives to inhabite them, if it you think it not convenient to spare any of your own men; as also by giving all those places names adapted to such places of this Kingdom as you shall think fit.¹⁰³

This statement makes it clear that successful settlement required, among other things, *acts of possession*. The Scots, like the English and the French of this period, believed in a notion of ownership grounded in the roman principle of *res nullius*. This nearly ubiquitous justification for the annexation of land in the Americas maintained that vacant lands remained common property until they were used, usually for agriculture.¹⁰⁴ The most recent and influential elaboration of *res nullius* had been undertaken by John Locke in his *Two Treatises of Government* (1690). Locke had argued: “As much land as a man tills, plants, improves, cultivates and can use the product of, so much is his property. He

¹⁰² For an analysis of this trend see, J.H. Elliot, “The Seizure of Overseas Territories by European Powers,” in *Theories of Empire, 1450-1800*, ed. David Armitage (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1998), 146-149. Moffat's narrative ended with an intriguing comment to this end. The Scots had refused “severall” offers by the Tule to visit the nearby gold mines. Moffat believed their motives were pragmatic. The Scots of Caledonia “being so taken up with their fortifyeing thereof, and doubting, after they had secured themselves, but ye mines would not have been their owne.” Burton, “Letters—George Moffat to Messr. Joseph Ormston, Alexander Hamilton, and Company,” 146.

¹⁰³ Burton, “Dispatches and Letters from the Directors to the Council at the Colony—15 April, 1699,” 128.

¹⁰⁴ Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France, c. 1500-c.1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 76.

by his labour does, as it were, enclose it from the common.”¹⁰⁵ Early Modern plantations had to transform the land through concerted labour, in doing so they converted the land into a place rather than a space of colonial knowledge. The intimate association with the land required by this sort of possession ensured that the features of the land were ‘taught to speak’; they were figuratively trained to behave in European ways. Borland's map is ample evidence of this approach of teaching features of the landscape to speak and act in Scottish terms. For the Scots, the success of possessive acts in the Darien was judged according to whether those acts succeeded in improving and cultivating the landscape.

Regrettably, the Scots colony was a dismal failure; during two years of half-hearted colonization the Caledonians established only tenuous claims of ownership over land in the Darien. Both settlements failed to enjoin their rights to the land by improving it through building, clearing, and naming. Given the vivid descriptions of the fertility of the Darien by Wafer, Pennycook, Wallace and others, some Scots attributed the failure of New Caledonia to the character of its colonists. John Locke, the reigning theorist of property, gave ample grounds for this condemnation in his explanation of common land: “He [God] gave it to the use of the industrious and rational (and labour was his title to it); not to the fancy or covetousness of the quarrelsome and contentious.”¹⁰⁶ A man who did not develop his land through industry was, in the words of Anthony Padgen, “in danger of being held not to be a man at all.”¹⁰⁷

After absconding from New Caledonia, the counsellors of the first expedition were lambasted for their poor leadership. George Moffat wondered, in disbelief, how

¹⁰⁵ Sterba, *Social and Political Philosophy*, 192. For further discussion of possession see also Grove, *Green Imperialism*, 65. Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 179.

¹⁰⁶ Sterba, *Social and Political Philosophy*, 192.

¹⁰⁷ Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, 76.

“such a valleable and impregnable place should be thus abandoned....[because of] want and by mismanagement both at home and abroad.” He believed that many of the Councillors were too young, too ambitious, and dreadfully unprepared for the sober task of colonization.¹⁰⁸ Only a few days after the arrival of the second expedition at New Caledonia settlers were openly questioning the competency of the earlier settlement.¹⁰⁹ James Byres was later to tell the Directors of the Company that “none but ye willfully ignorant can say that the Company's affeirs have been well managed by the Councell of the first Colonie.”¹¹⁰

There can be little doubt that the first effort to settle the Darien was crippled by bad government. Every week the counsellors appointed a new president for the colony from among their number. As a result, the council was crippled by indecision, back-biting, and a lack of continuity. But the system of weekly presidency was only an outward reflection of more troubling problems in the management of the colony. On 28 November, 1699, the Directors of the Company of Scotland subjected two of its Captains, William Murray and Lawrence Drummond, to intensive questioning concerning the failure of the first expedition. The final report attacked the counsellors of the first expedition for the misguided focus of their development projects. The report concluded: “That they spent their time while there mostly in fortifying and building. That they had neither time nor hands enough to plant, but only some few things for experiment, such as yams, Indian corn, Jamaican Pease.” The report also argued that while thirty seamen from each ship were sent to work on defences, they did not help with the clearing of the

¹⁰⁸ Burton, “Letters—George Moffat to Messr. Joseph Ormston, Alexander Hamilton, and Company,” 145.

¹⁰⁹ Burton, “Minutes of a General Meeting of Land and Sea Officers of the Fleet in Caledonia Bay: Rising Sun, 4 December 1699,” 34.

¹¹⁰ Burton, 225. It is worth noting that the personal conflict between Drummond and Byres likely affected his judgment of the first colony. Yet, the opinion of mismanagement is too widespread to be fabricated. This document is part of a ‘blame-game’ between Byres and Drummond.

land.¹¹¹ The settlers were more preoccupied with defence than the improvement of the landscape. And while their actions established de-facto possession of the land for the Scots, their failure to improve the landscape through clearing and planting was problematic for the success of a long-term venture.

The second expedition was also plagued by mismanagement. On 3 February, 1700, two months after they had resettled Caledonia, the new council informed the directors about their situation in Caledonia. According to their letter, they had erected seventy-two buildings for planters, fifteen huts for officers, two storehouses and a guard house *cum* church. At the time of writing they were doing their best to return the batteries to working order.¹¹² All in all, the letter conveyed the image of a colony struggling successfully towards re-establishment. However, evidence suggests that the counsellors were not being entirely honest. Following the failure of the second expedition, a committee was struck in Scotland to investigate slanderous accusations between two of the leading counsellors, Thomas Drummond and James Byres. The committee concluded that Byres had made several misrepresentations to the directors. For example, a journal kept by Byres recorded his instructions that Captain Thomas Ker be sent ashore to build huts in Fort St. Andrew. Ker was to take half of his men on land everyday, and he was to cut and clear space for the huts. Yet the committee noted that the official minutes showed no record of such an order.¹¹³ Furthermore, the committee concluded that twelve days passed before anyone was put ashore for clearing. And even these later landings were just sorties of small numbers of men who ventured out to the colony during the day and

¹¹¹ Insh, "The Abandonment of the First Colony—28th Nov. 1699," *Darien Shipping Papers*, 110, 111.

¹¹² Burton, "From the Council to the Directors: Rising Sun, 3 February, 1700," 241.

¹¹³ Burton "A Report from the Particular Committee appointed to examine and enquire into the specialties of the several matters of fact represented by James Byres and Capt. Thomas Drummond, *hinc inde* against one another," 231.

returned to the ship by night: “little or nothing was done untill the Spaniards appeared at sea.”¹¹⁴ Evidently, the re-settlement of Caledonia was both slow to begin and disorganized in its implementation.

The directors had hoped that the second expedition could avoid the factionalism which had consumed the first colony. “We are hopeful,” they wrote to the second colony’s ministers on 10 February, 1700, “that those in authority amongst you will study to discourage vice and encourage Piety...and not split upon the same rock of riot and immoralities that their Predecessors did.”¹¹⁵ Unbeknownst to them, the Reverend Alexander Shields, a settler on the second expedition, had dispatched a letter home days earlier which contained withering disapproval of his fellow Caledonians. He charged the settlers with swearing, blasphemy, drunkenness, lying, and stealing, “which uses [sic] to be counted the villany of the meaner sort only, but here [is] found among Gentlemen.”¹¹⁶ But these charges were part of a larger agenda. Shields argued that both colonies had squandered the opportunities provided by the fertility of the Darien through their “wickedness and mismanagement.”¹¹⁷ In this sweeping condemnation, he contended that the Scottish colonists lacked “the patience, Resolution, Art, and Industry that other men have.”¹¹⁸ The broad range of his condemnations, exempting only those few “that profess Religion,” and the tone of his text suggests that the true “wickedness” was not swearing

¹¹⁴ Burton, 234.

¹¹⁵ Walter Macleod, ed. “Letter from the Directors of the Darien Scheme to the Ministers of the Colony: Edinburgh, the 10th day of February, 1700,” *Journal of the Hon. John Erskine of Carnock, 1683-1687* (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, 1893), 245.

¹¹⁶ Macleod, 242-243.

¹¹⁷ Macleod, 242.

¹¹⁸ Macleod, 242. Again, these comments cannot entirely be extricated from the factionalism that prevailed in the colony. Shields, like Drummond, was no friend of Byres. “I was never so insolently maltreated by any man living, as by Mr. Byres, upbraiding me with impertinency, nonsense, and telling me expressly, he cared no more for what I could say than for the barking of a dog.”

and drinking. For Shields, these were overt signs of a far more fundamental problem.

True “wickedness,” in his mind, was mismanagement.¹¹⁹

Improvement tied civilization together with the proper development of the landscape. As we have seen earlier, members of the first expedition believed that the Tule were less than civilized because they did not properly develop their lands. This connection between civilization and improvement was also found among the settlers of the second expedition. Francis Borland was less than tactful when he discussed the Aboriginal (mis)use of nature:

They are naturally a very slothfull People & labour but little they subdue & plant but small parcells of land, so much as serves their present necessitie, so that their Habitations are but little open spaces cleared, in the midst of vast, thick, tall & solitary Woods, which like a high wall encompasseth them round about; That justly they may be compared unto an Owl in the Desart [sic] and the Pelican of the wilderness, that do no see when good cometh, they do indeed inhabit the dark Places of the Earth, on more accounts then one.¹²⁰

The strong language of this paragraph parallels the language used by Shields to describe the colonists of the second expedition. He regarded the lack of work done by the colonists as a disturbing sign of their selfishness and self-indulgence. “We find very many of our number idle and useless,” wrote Shields, “and good for nothing but to destroy victuals: and our Gentlemen Officers, subs, and sub-subs, and Volunteers, think and say, they are too gentle to work, and they came not here for that end.”¹²¹ Shields was contemptuous of any settlers who eschewed work. He directed equal scorn at those settlers who were uncultured and idle as those who claimed to be *too* cultured to undertake hard labour. In

¹¹⁹ Macleod, 243. Although, not all of this mismanagement was the fault of the colonists. Shields points out that some of his recommendations were made difficult by the lack of food and supplies from Scotland. He also said, interestingly, that “there should have been more working men, besides Negroes, without which it is thought strange to attempt any Settlement in these hot Countries.” There is no evidence that African slaves were used by the colony. Macleod, 243-244.

¹²⁰ Borland, *Memoirs of Darien*, 13.

¹²¹ Macleod, “Letter from the Directors,” 243.

describing their wickedness, Shields placed both of these colonists at the very fringes of proper Scottish civilization: “there was never a Colony in the world settled with more wicked debauchees.”¹²² Shields discursively connected the colonists’ lack of industry with an absence of ‘true’ civilization. In so doing, he inverted the powerful improvement ideal. That which normally elevated the Scots above the non-European was used by Shields to reduce them and push them to the edges of enlightened society.

Excuses were made by colonists to explain why they had failed to plant themselves in such fertile soil. A letter by Lieutenant Robert Turnbull, dated 11 April, 1699, ended with a long and detailed list of the tools that future colonists should bring with them. He listed types and numbers of saws, axes, shovels, pick-axes, and so forth, which he thought would be necessary for a successful resettlement of the Darien. His instructive comments suggest that the first expedition was not properly equipped with the tools required for clearing a jungle. He cautioned that any new settler would need “2 masheet knives shorter and stronger than they that was don for the Company.”¹²³ Yet his letter reflected the positive attitude towards nature consistent with accounts from the first expedition.¹²⁴ The surrounding land was depicted as fertile and awaiting use: “[we are] in the middle of the golden world in the West Indies. So if you take care to send us *good and able men wyse and honest Counsellors* there is not fear but you and the rest of the adventurers in the stock shall be the happiest people in the world in a very short tyme.”¹²⁵ In formulating a long list of the items needed for proper settlement, Turnbull endorsed an improvement project equipped with both better tools and men of good moral fibre.

¹²² Macleod, 242.

¹²³ J.J. Spencer, “Some Darien Letters,” *Scottish Historical Review*, 11 (1914): 406.

¹²⁴ Spencer, 405. He told Col. John Erskine that “I wish wt all my heart...[you] would come heir for ane start for I am not able to demonstratt the ritchness of this pleace as weile under as above ground.” 406.

¹²⁵ Italics mine. Spencer, 405.

The counsellors of the second expedition were far more negative in their portrayal of the Darien and seemed determined to contradict all of the positive observations made by the first expedition. The landscape was tree covered, but few of the trees were usable. The soil was rich, but yielded copper where the first settlers saw silver. And even this metal was of little use, since it likely cost more to mine it than could be made by selling it. And so the list continued. As in the Turnbull letter, the counsellors suggested that they did not have the proper tools for settlement: “wee have litle hopes of getting ought done till we have working instruments.”¹²⁶ But here the similarity ended. For where Turnbull seemed positive that the Darien could be developed with the proper tools and better men, the Council of the second expedition believed that they needed a new kind of labourer entirely to use their new tools: “but on planting and improvem^t no great stress can be laid for reimburseing the adventurers, unless negroes be procured, white men being unfitt for that work, more coastly in their maintainance, and so only fitt for defending the settlem^t and overseeing the work.”¹²⁷ Joyce Chaplin's work suggests that Africans during this period were constructed by Europeans as naturally disposed to the toil and the heat of plantation life. Not only did this view help legitimize slavery, it also signalled English insecurity about the effects of a tropical climate on European bodies.¹²⁸ The second expedition's insistence on African slave labour can be read as evidence of increased pessimism about the land's ability to support the Scots.

Alexander Shields offered insight into the dichotomy between the first and second expeditions. He contended that “stories of abundance” characterized the first expedition:

¹²⁶ Burton, “Letter from the Council to the Directors: On board the Rising Sun, in Caledonia Bay, 23d December, 1699,” 215, 216.

¹²⁷ Burton, 216

¹²⁸ Joyce Chaplin, *Subject Matter: Technology, the Body, and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier, 1500-1676* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 123.

“Their affection to the place, and delight in it for the time of their plenty, their hopes of success and Interest, influenced and oblinded them to write so.”¹²⁹ But the second wave of colonists found little prosperity in a golden land, and their disappointment pushed them to indulge in disillusionment about its potential. “[O]ur too big Expectations,” explained Shields, “forming too large Ideas of things at a distance, being so confoundedly disappointed by the Desertion of the Colony...this will picque and prompt them to trouble you with quite contrary Accounts.”¹³⁰ This second wave of colonists had been nursed on glowing tales about the wealth and fertility of New Caledonia. Both of these qualities were called into question by the evacuation of Scots from Caledonia. It was no longer improvable land, but instead strewn with bogs, hemmed in with mountains, and blanketed by thick rainforest.¹³¹ It is safe to say that Borland's impressions upon first arrival were characteristic: “expecting here to meet with our Friends and Country-men, we found nothing but a vast howling Wilderness, the Colony deserted and gone, their Hutts all burnt, their Fort most part ruined.”¹³² The second settlers thought themselves surrounded by a hostile and unpleasant nature. Improvement, which was dependent upon a fertile environment, was under these circumstances seen as difficult and perhaps futile.

The Scots were twice ousted from the land they wanted to improve. For some, this was incontrovertible proof of the barrenness of the Isthmus. But Shields approached the problem differently. He understood and described the source of these disappointed

¹²⁹ Macleod, “Letter from the Directors,” 241.

¹³⁰ Macleod, 241.

¹³¹ The following, taken from an account from the second expedition, demonstrates how settlers from the second expedition blamed the lack of development on the environment. “And where as there were full accounts given of the Colonies having cut all the wood, on the neck of the Isthmus, we found no such thing, but on the contrary, on the side within the Bay unenviable Mon graves [read: Mangroves] and Mossie ground, and on the side without the Bay unaccessible rocks, and the middle way Moutanous and full of trees where of there are not six cut.” James Byres, *A Letter to a Friend at Edinburgh from Rotterdam; Giving an Account of the Scots affairs in Darien*, ECCO (Edinburgh: 1702), 15-16.

¹³² Borland, *Memoirs of Darien*, 30.

expectations, and yet he maintained a belief in the fertility of the Darien. The problem, he contended, lay not with the Darien but with the colonists. In his mind, the collapse of New Caledonia was linked to the failure of the Scots to act like proper civilizers, which in turn discredited the status of the colony's leaders as proper gentlemen. Industry, or rather the lack thereof, was mobilized by Shields as a biting attack on the civility of the Scots and their leaders.

In the Darien the fractious Scots fought about who was to blame for the failing state of New Caledonia: nature or man. In retrospect, New Caledonia was undone by an aggravating union of mismanagement, the natural world, and inflated expectations. But the debate which raged among Scots should not be dismissed. Those who blamed nature believed the Darien was simply incapable of improvement. Those who blamed man believed the Scots colonists were rogues and rascals. Both arguments appealed to the discourse of improvement in their search for answers. But it is with the latter that I wish to end. The improvement ideal was founded upon moral judgments—informed and reinforced by Christian teachings and emerging scientific belief—about the proper uses of land. These moral judgments aided the Scots colonization effort by justifying the seizure of land from 'slothful' indigenous peoples. But what Shields argued was different and new. He turned the eye of improvement inward, towards the colonizers themselves. In doing so, he was at the vanguard of a "culture of improvement." Although this culture—with a focus on personal advancement and betterment—would not gain true currency until the middle of the eighteenth century, it first emerged at the end of the tumultuous seventeenth century.¹³³ The widespread appeal of moral improvement during

¹³³ Peter Borsay says that it emerged "in the return to 'normality' after the trauma of the Civil Wars and Interregnum," when, "commercial expansion, urbanization, the Scientific Revolution, Protestant theology

the eighteenth century was not automatic, rather it was imposed from above through law and spread by clubs and societies.¹³⁴ Perhaps it is unsurprising then that Shields found encouragement for his position in a letter sent to the colony by the Church of Scotland on 21 July, 1699. The General Assembly, the highest religious authority in Scotland, had warned of the crippling threat idleness posed to the colony. “Let your laws strike severely at Idleness,” because, as they insisted, “Idle People are not only Useless, but Burdensom in a Common-wealth.” They concluded their warnings about idleness in telling terms: “Let not the foolish notion ever get Footing with you....That it is below a Gentleman to follow Trade and Imployment.”¹³⁵ The Scots were entering an age when the true gentleman would be an industrious improver. By this measure, the Scots of the Darien had been found severely wanting.

and an expanding middling order—fused together to create a dynamic new idea.” Peter Borsay, “The Culture of Improvement,” in *Short Oxford History of the British Isles: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. Paul Langford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 184.

¹³⁴ Borsay, 191.

¹³⁵ General Assembly, *Letter from the Commission of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to the Honourable Council and Inhabitants of the Scots Colony of Caledonia in America*, EBBO (Glasgow: 1699), 8.

Chapter 2: A Tale of Two Monkeys

At the mention of Darien what romantic visions rise before one...of Scottish claymore and Indian machete flashing together in the tropical sunshine as Captain Campbell of Fonab charged the entrenchments of Toubacante.

George Insh, *Scottish Colonial Schemes*, 1922

Civility—European civility—can only guarantee the stability of its own foundations by denying the substantiality of other worlds, other words, other narratives.

Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, 1986

In 1699 the *History of Caledonia* offered the Scottish public the first detailed glimpse of life in New Caledonia. The pamphlet featured an amusing account of an encounter between the Tule and the Scots. After their initial contact with the Tule, the Scots sent an envoy into the interior to meet with the Tule “king” and enjoin his aid in exchange for a pledge of mutual defense. The influential William Paterson, “the First of the Embassy,” assured the Tule leader that the Scots would offer unstinting aid to the Tule against their enemies. But Paterson’s “short and pithy” announcement was serendipitously interrupted by a group of monkeys crashing through the treetops overhead and urinating everywhere they went. The industrious monkeys, “hung down by one another’s Tails, in a Chain; and swinging in that manner till the lowermost catch’d hold of a Bough of another Tree and drew up the rest; and it’s by this means that they pass from top to top of high Trees.” According to the pamphlet, this was a good sign: “The *Indians* looked upon this as a very good *Omen*, and interpreted it thus, *That as the Monkeys by this Stratagem were a mutual assistance one to another, so the Scots and Indians would be, and that all would end in pleasure and profit.*”¹ Just as the monkeys could not travel effectively through the

¹ A Gentleman Lately Arriv’d, *The History of Caledonia, or, The Scots Colony in Darien in the West Indies*, EEBO (London: 1699), 33-34.

treetops without aiding each other, the pamphleteer's story suggested to Scottish readers that neither the Tule nor the Scots could hope to thrive upon the Isthmus—especially in the face of Spanish antagonism—without banding together in common cause.²

Conveniently disregarding their status as interlopers in the region, the Scots looked to incorporate the Tule as energetic and grateful subjects in this first colony of the projected Scottish empire.³ Accordingly, Tule actions and customs described by the Scottish must be read in reference to the overwhelming hope among Scots that their nation could forge a unique empire that celebrated trade but eschewed conquest. They looked at the world around them and saw potential trading partners where a martial nation would see potential enemies.⁴ As the anthropologist Roy Wagner once wrote, “All

² Indeed, the appearance of an unexpected omen endorsing a Tule-Scot alliance would have been regarded by early modern Scottish readers as a providential blessing of their designs for empire. For the tendency to see coincidence as proof of God's active interference in the earthly realm see Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

³ Robert Ferguson, amidst arguments that the Spanish claims to the Darien were untenable, admitted that they had a right to the land according to the Roman law of prescription. Spanish rights, Ferguson said, sprang only from their “[Papal] claim and upon the foot of prescription thro’ their having inhabited, occupied and inherited them for 200 years without interruption, disseizure or dispossession.” In the colonial context, prescription meant that enduring *de facto* occupancy on the land, even if initially illegal, could give a nation lawful ownership of the territory. As Juan de Solórnazo y Pereira said of prescription in 1629, “Even a tyranny becomes in time a perfect and legitimate monarchy.” Despite this accepted meaning of prescription, Ferguson subsequently denied Spanish claims on the basis of their tyrannical rule of the Indies. Walter Herries, the vindictive opponent of the Company, pointedly described the Company's actions for what they clearly were: “settling a colony in another man's dominions.” Drawn from Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France, c. 1500-c.1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 89-91.

⁴ Alexander Maighie, a colonist from the first expedition, was instructed to tell that Spanish that the Scots had “set down and settled here for the encouraging and advancing of trade,” and were “firmly resolved to commit no matter of hostility, or give least offence or abuse to any...who shall not highly and justly provock us thereto.” It appears that the Scots did not seriously believe that they would be forced to take up arms to defend their new colony. A letter from the directors in February 1699, apologized to the colony for the failure to “condescend and agree upon” signals to distinguish friendly ships from those of enemies. It was, they noted ruefully, an “omission.” The directors' instructions to the second expedition were notably more realistic about the prospects for conflict. Captain James Gibson was told to make haste for New Caledonia, to be punctilious in displaying the Company's colors to English ships of war, and to pass the Caribbean islands only by night “so as not to be seen from the shore.” Gibson was also to begin training the men for war as soon as he left port, “the sea and land officers should endeavor to show all men the use of both great and small guns.” Not only did the Company fear English interference, it was also preparing the men for an assault against New Caledonia. The directors instructed the second expedition that “(if you find it possess'd by any other)...repossess yourselves thereof by force of arms.” George Insh, *The Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies* (London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), 21. John Burton, *The*

men project, tease, and extend their ideas as analogies into a world of intransigent phenomena.”⁵ To evaluate their suitability as partners in the foundation of New Caledonia, the Scots not only dwelt a great deal on the Tule’s aptitude for civilization, they also focused on the vital role that the Scottish empire would play in training up the Tule in the ways of European civility. The Scots evaluated the Tule’s ability for, and achievement of, civility by reading their clothing and by evaluating the rationality of their actions. In doing so, the Scots unwittingly trapped themselves in a world of European symbols and cultural cues that had little meaning or value for the Tule with whom they treated. The conclusions made by settlers about the world they had stepped into tended to be more often self-referential inventions than genuine explanations. “[E]very time we make others part of a ‘reality’ that we alone invent, denying their creativity by usurping the right to create,” explained Wagner, “we use those people and their way of life and make them subservient to ourselves.”⁶

Although other European strangers visited Caledonia intermittently, the most sustained inter-cultural interaction experienced by the Scots of the first and second colonies was with the Tule. Historical research about the Scots’ indigenous allies has stressed the geo-political importance of the Scot-Tule alliance as a pre-condition for the success of the struggling Caledonian settlement. Ethno-historian Ignacio Gallup-Diaz argues that the Scots had to rely upon Tule for their very survival in the Darien. He

Darien Papers: Being a Selection of Original Letters and Official Documents Relating to the Establishment of a Colony at Darien by the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies, 1695-1700 (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, 1849), 89, 121. George Insh, *Papers Relating to the Ships and Voyages of the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies* (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, 1924), 185. Burton, 164. For an examination of the interplay between state interests and trading companies during the seventeenth century see Michael J. Braddick, “The English Government, War, Trade, and Settlement, 1625-1688,” in *Oxford History of the British Empire: Origins of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 52.

⁵ Roy Wagner, *The Invention of Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 34.

⁶ Wagner, 16.

contextualizes the Tule as experienced actors in a competitive imperial world of “rainforest diplomacy” in which the Scots were neophytes.⁷ The approach of historian Bridget McPhail focuses instead upon the Tule as they were perceived in Scotland. Her analysis of the pamphlet literature surrounding the Darien venture proposes that the Tule were “constructions designed to suit the authors’ immediate rhetorical purposes” of justifying the Scottish expedition.⁸ Yet her analysis also overemphasizes the degree to which Scottish settlers could empathize with the Tule. “To meet the Indians,” McPhail asserts, “was to meet a more golden, less hairy, and considerably cleaner version of themselves.”⁹ McPhail thus uncritically accepts the self-image that seventeenth-century Scots constructed to legitimize and justify their imperial venture. She reproduces what Andrew MacKillop has identified as the “myth of the culturally and racially sensitive Scot.”¹⁰ My intention in this chapter is to examine the Scottish rhetoric of empire and try to understand how it was enacted in inter-cultural meetings between the Scots and the Tule. I focus first on the domestic Scottish creation of the Tule as collaborators in Scottish Empire. I then track the challenges Scots faced in imposing their ideas of the Tule on the actual people they met in the Darien.

Because this is a chapter about decoding Scottish interpretations of the Tule, we must first understand Scottish expectations for empire. There is no better place to begin

⁷ Ignacio Gallup-Díaz, “Tule Interactions with the Scots and the English at the Close of the Seventeenth Century,” *The Door of the Seas and Key to the Universe: Indian Politics and Imperial Rivalry in the Darien, 1640-1750* (Gutenberg<e>, Columbia University Press. 2001), 1.

⁸ Bridget McPhail. “Through a Glass, Darkly: Scots and Indians Converge at Darien,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 18 (November 1994): 140.

⁹ McPhail, 141.

¹⁰ Andrew MacKillop, “Europeans, Britons, and Scots: Scottish Sojourning Networks and Identities in Asia, 1700-1815,” *A Global Clan: Scottish Migrant Networks and Identities Since the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Angela McCarthy (New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006), 26.

than with that quintessential symbol of the Scottish empire, the coat of arms of the Company of Scotland (see Figure 3). The Arms testified to the expansive Scottish vision of empire. The shield in the center was flanked by an Aboriginal and an African, suggesting that co-operation with Indigenous peoples was central to their ideal of empire. Each quarter of the shield emblazoned with the Scottish Saltire was given to an animal of continental significance; the camel, the elephant, and the llama stood for the trade routes of Africa, Asia and the Americas, respectively. Significantly, the top-most quarter was reserved for that European beast of burden, the sailing ship—the vital symbol of European expansion and commerce. At the top of the Arms the rising sun that rose over the vast ocean captured the limitless boundaries of Scottish ambitions. As a whole, the Arms stood for a Scottish empire of the seas, driven by trade, and ensured by Indigenous aid. Yet the hope imbued in the Arms offered a stark contrast to the depressing conditions in which it was created.

The Company of Scotland was founded just as Scotland was experiencing a decade of intense economic crisis and political alienation known colloquially as “King William’s Seven Ill Years”.¹¹ The Glencoe Massacre of 1692 and the subsequent inquiry left the country divided by factionalism and severely compromised the legitimacy of the Crown and its agents.¹² To make matters worse, between 1695 and 1699 the country suffered a series of harvest failures that brought on famine.¹³ In the international sphere,

¹¹ Christopher Whatley notes that the period of turmoil which marked the end of the seventeenth century in Scotland, although not universal in its scope nor necessarily unique to Scotland, was widely regarded by Scots as unusual: “virtually everywhere and at all social levels for which records survive there was an awareness that something was badly wrong.” Christopher Whatley, “Taking Stock: Scotland at the End of the Seventeenth Century,” in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 127 (2005), 106-109.

¹² See Paul Hopkins, *Glencoe and the End of the Highland Wars* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1986).

¹³ Michael Wasser, “The Western Witch-Hunt of 1697-1700: the Last Major Witch-hunt in Scotland,” in *The Witch-Hunt in Context*, ed. Julian Goodare (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 150.



Figure 3: Coat of Arms of the Company of Scotland

Scotland was feeling more and more as though its trade interests were being sacrificed to English foreign policy. During the War of the Grand Alliance, Scotland's vital trade with France had been devastated by French privateers. When Scotland appealed to the English navy to protect her shipping heading to France, England refused and then took the further step of blocking Scottish trade with France entirely. Adding insult to injury, Scottish contributions to William's war with France were slighted when the nation received no compensation from the 1697 Peace of Ryswick settlement.¹⁴ In 1698, the Scottish political writer Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun reacted to these events by publishing an extended meditation on Scotland's troubles. "In less than an age," Fletcher complained, "we are sunk to so low a condition as to be despised of [by] all our neighbours...and all may not only provoke, but safely trample upon us."¹⁵ But Fletcher saw a clear, if politically dangerous, solution to the Scottish problem: trade.¹⁶ "[B]y no contrivance of any man, but by an unforeseen and unexpected change of the genius of this nation," Fletcher mused, "all their thoughts and inclinations, as if united and directed by a higher power, seem to be turned upon trade, and to conspire together for its advancement, which is the only means to recover us from our present miserable and despicable condition."¹⁷

Fletcher's notion that economic success would reinvigorate the nation with moral virtue held great weight in Scotland. As early as 1681, Scottish merchants had seriously contemplated using trade and colonization to solve internal economic woes. The "Memorial concerning the Scottish plantation to be erected in some place of America,"

¹⁴ Drawn from William Ferguson, *Scotland's Relations With England: A Survey to 1707* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1977), 176.

¹⁵ Andrew Fletcher, *The Political Works of Andrew Fletcher, Esq. of Saltoun*, ECCO (Glasgow, 1749), 56-57.

¹⁶ I say dangerous because Fletcher worried that the great investment of money and hope that Scots had placed into the Company of Scotland had engaged the country in a great gamble. If the plan was to fail, he believed that all of Scotland's trade would be ruined, and the people would be so disheartened they would never again consider such a scheme. Fletcher, 61.

¹⁷ Fletcher, 57.

produced by Scottish merchants at the behest of the Scottish Committee of Trade, outlined the basic steps needed to secure any new plantation.¹⁸ The spokesperson of the conference, the Provost of Linlithgow, believed that creating an overseas colony “would be a great ease to the countrey and void it of very maney both idle and dissenting persons.”¹⁹ Even before the crisis of the 1690s, Scots had turned to colonization as a way of bolstering their flagging economy. Colonization, aside from opening up new markets in far off lands, provided a convenient outlet for exporting undesirable peoples who might destabilize the country. In 1669 the Privy Council of Scotland was petitioned to provide men and women who might serve as indentured servants. Reflecting the contemporary English desire for Scottish servants, the supplicants were eager to relieve the nation of “strong and idle beggars, Egyptians, common and notorious whores, theeves,” and other “dissolute and louse persons.”²⁰ During the 1680s, many Scots who dissented from the politically dominant Episcopalian religion chose life in the colonies in order to escape the increasingly oppressive rule of James, Duke of York, Charles II’s brother and representative in Scotland.²¹ The abortive Covenanters’ colony of Stuart’s Town in South Carolina (1684) and the more successful colony of Quaker Scots in East New Jersey (1683) indicate that a broad swathe of Scots were keen to engage in the world overseas during this period.²²

¹⁸ George Insh, *Scottish Colonial Schemes, 1620-1686* (Glasgow: Maclehose, Jackson, & Co, 1922), 124.

¹⁹ Insh, *Scottish Colonial Schemes*, 126-127.

²⁰ David Dobson, “Seventeenth-Century Scottish Communities in the Americas,” in *Scottish Communities Abroad in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Alexia Grosjean and Steve Murdoch (Brill, 2005), 119.

²¹ This was especially appealing for Scotland during the early 1680s when an increasingly anti-Presbyterian parliament created religious turmoil, as well as many exiles, by subjecting all public officials to a confusing Test of faith designed to protect Episcopalian Protestantism. For a summary of the fallout from the Act Anent a Test (1681) see Tim Harris, *Restoration: Charles II and his Kingdoms, 1660-1685* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 347-356.

²² See Insh, *Scottish Colonial Schemes* for a treatment of the South Carolina settlement. For a treatment of the East Jersey settlement see Ned C. Landsman, *Scotland and Its First American Colony, 1683-1765*,

By 1699 the language of those advocating trade, while repeating similar themes, had taken on far more urgency. Philo-Caledon, an anonymous defender of Caledonia, believed colonization was the natural solution for Scottish problems. He stridently argued that overseas trade and colonization would be “a Mean[s] for Enriching the Nation, and Curing these two evil Diseases amongst us, of *Beggary* and *Idleness*.”²³ When news of the settlers’ safe arrival reached Edinburgh, an explosion of pamphlets and poems captured the mood of relief felt throughout Scotland. One poet wrote:

And *Indian Gold* shall soon release
The Nation from its *Tempral Grand Disease* *Poverty

No swarms of *Beggars* shall annoy,
No *Vagabonds* corrupt our *Wealth*;
But every Man that enjoys Health
His frugal *Countrey* shall *imploy*
T’increase our *Store*, & crown our *lasting Joy*.²⁴

Trade and colonization had captured the public mood in Scotland. Scotland’s economic, environmental and political ills were naively, but hopefully, ascribed to poverty. It was widely felt that curing poverty—and expelling the most troublesome poor and idle—would restore the nation to a time of mythic martial and moral virtue. Alexander Pennecuik’s panegyric to the King concluded with pride: “Nor shall insulting Neighbours henceforth taunt / The gen’rous SCOTS, for Poverty and Want, / Our Ships through all the World shall go and come, / Ev’n from the Rising to the Setting Sun.”²⁵ Trade, as Pennecuik’s verse suggested, was not only mobilized as a cure to Scotland’s economic

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983). For a recent review of early Scottish colonial schemes see David Dobson, “Seventeenth-century Scottish Communities in the Americas.”

²³ Philo-Caledon, *Scotland's Present Duty, or, A Call to the Nobility, Gentry, Ministry and Commonalty of this Land to be Duely Affected with, and Vigorously to Act for, our Common Concern in Caledonia*, EEBO (Edinburgh, 1700), 5.

²⁴ The poverty aside appears in the original poem. *An Ode Made on the Welcome News of the Safe Arrival and Kind Reception of the Scottish Colony at Darien in America*, EEBO (Edinburgh, 1699).

²⁵ Alexander Pennecuik, *Caledonia Triumphans: a Panegyrick to the King*, EEBO (Edinburgh, 1699).

problems. To the desperate and inexperienced Scots, trade would become a way for the civilized to circumvent the violence of the imperial world.

In trying to create an empire of trade rather than conquest, Scotland was following the lead of her two most influential political and economic thinkers, William Paterson and Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun. Yet although Fletcher's work was to prove far more enduring, it was William Paterson who managed to capture the imagination of the Scottish people with his daring plan to settle the Isthmus of Darien. One poet wrote in praise, "Admire the steady sense of Paterson. / It is no common genius can persuade / A nation bred in wars to think of trade."²⁶ Paterson's call for settlement on the Isthmus presaged a future without the violent conflicts that had been the calling card of European expansion for centuries. By focusing on an empire of the sea, and not the land, he argued that Scots could expect "to become Arbitrators of the Commercial world, without being liable to the fatigues, expences and dangers, or contracting the Guilt and blood of Alexander and Cesar."²⁷ Paterson complemented this focus by suggesting that Caledonia should be built upon what he felt were the cornerstones of the Roman Empire: "general naturalization, liberty of conscience, and freedom of government." Doing so would allow Scotland to populate her colonies and yet avoid the threat of depopulation that had crippled the Spanish nation.²⁸ For Paterson, neither country nor religion mattered in the face of commerce: "[B]ut of whatever Nation or Religion a Man be, (if one of Us) he ought to be look'd upon to be of the same Interest and Inclination."²⁹ By creating a

²⁶ *A Poem Upon the Undertaking of the Royal Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies*, EEBO (Edinburgh: 1697), 8.

²⁷ David Armitage, "The Scottish Vision of Empire: Intellectual Origins of the Darien Venture," in *A Union for Empire: Political Thought and the Union of 1707*, ed. John Robertson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 104.

²⁸ Armitage, 104.

²⁹ Quoted in Armitage, 104.

colony united by the goal of trade, he sought to trump the divisiveness associated with nationality and creed in favour of the higher goal of profit. Paterson believed that the country which succeeded in creating a colony driven by trade would accrue great economic benefits while enjoying the loving allegiance of those she ruled.³⁰ He envisioned Caledonia as a colony of the world that Scotland would manage to her great economic benefit.

Paterson's view of the world was embraced and expanded upon by popular culture in Scotland. His liberal policies and sparkling vision of a future with great wealth, widespread co-operation, and little conflict gave rise to a curious political label in popular culture: Patersonian government. Following the departure of the first expedition one poet wrote wistfully: "No Brawle, No Murmure, no Complaint, / No Cause of any Discontent, / Where Patersonian-Government / Shall once commence a Footing, / His wholesome Laws being publish'd there, / Shall harmless keep their Goods and Gear, / And free their Persons from all Fear."³¹ The ideals of Patersonian government demonstrated the fundamental differences between Scottish empire and the empires of all others. The idea of Scotland as the purveyor of kind imperialism was given special force in the following stanza from the above poem:

To SCOTLAND'S just and never-dying Fame,
We'll in ASIA, AFRICA and AMERICA proclame
Liberty! Liberty! Nay to the shame
Of all that went before us;

³⁰ After the failure of the Scots in the Darien, Paterson tried to revive his scheme and present it to the English crown. In this document he outlined the long-term benefits of liberty of conscience. He concluded that by allowing the colony to trade with "people of all nations upon easy and reasonable terms" and allowing the Indigenous peoples to "maintain the freedom of their governments and trade" the English could expect to overthrow the Spanish dominance of the West Indies. William Paterson, "A Proposal to Plant a Colony in Darien; To Protect the Indians Against Spain; And to Open the Trade of South America to all Nations, 1701," In *The Writings of William Paterson Founder of the Bank of England*, vol. 1, ed. Saxe Bannister (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1968), 148.

³¹ *Trade's release: or, Courage to the Scotch-Indian-Company*, EEBO (Edinburgh 1699-1700).

Wherever we Plant, TRADE shall be free,
 In three Years time, I plainly forsee,
 GOD BLESS THE SCOTTISH-COMPANY
 Shall be the *Indian Chorus*.³²

The Company of Scotland was to distinguish itself from other imperial powers by its reliance on trade and cooperation, not conquest and annexation.³³ Thus, the expansion of empire would not be undertaken solely for the benefits of the Scots, but would bring freedom and prosperity to all those who found themselves within the Scottish sphere of influence. The Scottish position that they were kind imperialists had been mobilized already by the French and English to justify their colonial ventures in the Americas. Pagden observes that the English belief that they “had been welcomed by the Amerindians as liberators became a staple in the propaganda war” that the English pursued against the Spanish during this era.³⁴ The belief that a Scottish empire would be fundamentally different from those that had come before found its most vocal expression in the propaganda celebrating the Scottish expedition.

³² *Trade's release*.

³³ Scots might have instead justified their occupation of the Darien by emphasizing their status as God's elect and their empire as the work of providence. A prominent example of this was the ‘Western Design,’ Oliver Cromwell's poorly executed attempt to conquer the Caribbean in 1654-5. Cromwell's plan had been underwritten by the belief that God had intended the English Revolution, and the Calvinism that had brought it forth, to be spread around the world. Formal territorial arguments that emphasized godliness contended that “since all *dominium*—that is, property rights and sovereignty—derives from God's grace, not from God's law, no non-Christian, and no ‘ungodly’ Christian, could be the bearer of such rights.” This definition left little room for Native Americans to live alongside Europeans. Yet, though providential thought was ubiquitous among Scots, few seem to have thought it grounds for dispossessing the aboriginals or establishing claims to the region. The General Assembly casually mixed providence and natural law in the following comment: “[We] have rejoiced to hear of the good hand of our Gracious God continued upon you for Good, in your acceptableness of the *Natives*...[He] hath made *room* for you with the free consent of these *Natives*, the Natural Lords of the Land.” Scottish political writers also rejected divine grace as a fictional pretext for possession. Robert Ferguson wrote that “Civil Dominion and Property” were “in no ways founded in Grace, or in the Orthodoxy of *Faith*, but in Principles of Nature.” Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, 75. General Assembly, *Letter from the Commission of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to the Honourable Council and Inhabitants of the Scots colony of Caledonia in America*, EBBO (Glasgow: 1699), 2. Robert Ferguson, *A Just and Modest Vindication of the Scots Design*, EEBO (Edinburgh: 1699), 75.

³⁴ Anthony Pagden, “The Struggle for Legitimacy and the Image of Empire in the Atlantic to c. 1700,” in *Oxford History of the British Empire: Origins of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 52.

The belief that trade, rather than conquest, was the path to an enlightened and stable empire was the basis for Andrew Fletcher's *Discorsi Dell Cose Di Spagna*—A Discourse Concerning the Affairs of Spain (1698).³⁵ The pamphlet was both a virulent political criticism of the bloated Spanish monarchy and a careful interrogation of the key mistakes made by the Spanish empire.³⁶ Fletcher believed that the greed and aggression that had decimated the Aborigines of New Spain had been thoughtless in the extreme. To maintain the “new establishments, and an absolute form of government” required to rule oppressed Americans, the Spanish Crown was forced to make an intensive investment of men, arms, and money. The Spanish King, Fletcher argued, had erred in not “chusing to govern his distant states, with the good-will of the people, by maintaining their ancient privileges and customs” or, failing that, through the establishment of colonies.³⁷ For Scotland (which he never mentioned), the lesson was clear. To maintain a thriving colony overseas it was vital that the Scots obtained the co-operation of the local people. In this way, Scotland could avoid the debilitating conflicts that had crippled the Spanish empire and focus upon enriching herself by way of her colonial possessions.³⁸

Defending the rights of the local peoples also became a mantra of the pamphleteers who wrote to vindicate Scottish claims to land in the Darien. Bridget McPhail's survey of the pamphlet literature produced about the Darien concludes that most writers insisted that Aboriginal rights to the land had to be respected by any nation that intended to settle amongst them. “[R]ight and property,” according to the

³⁵ Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, 118-120.

³⁶ Armitage, “The Scottish Vision of Empire,” 109.

³⁷ Fletcher, *The Political Works of Andrew Fletcher*, 135-136.

³⁸ For detailed analysis of this tract see Armitage, “The Scottish Vision of Empire,” 107-109. This paragraph borrows his analysis in concluding that the pamphlet was a subtle description of how a Scots enterprise could avoid Spanish problems and, thereby improve its imperial fortunes.

pamphleteers, “was a function neither of particular forms of government, nor of wealth and power.”³⁹ The pamphleteers argued that the Scots had obtained the right to settle in the Darien by careful and respectful negotiations with the Tule—the “natural proprietors” of the Darien region.⁴⁰ It seems that few Scots seriously contemplated the implications of labelling the Tule ‘proprietors’; rather Tule sovereignty was a convenient way for Scots to bypass Spain’s ongoing occupation of the Darien.⁴¹ The Scots argued that the Aborigines—by their own testimony—had never surrendered their territorial rights to the Spaniards. In addition, writers such as Robert Ferguson insisted that although Spaniards had nominally ruled over the Darien for two-hundred years, their duplicitous use of “Fraud, Violence, and Usurpation” to secure their conquest of the Americas had invalidated their territorial claims.⁴² Through pamphlets and poetry, the Scots had created an image of themselves as respectful imperialists. Theirs was to be an empire based not on conquest or violence but on trade and co-operation.

Such an empire required Indian subjects who were not only independent from the Spanish, but also rational actors who could make agreements with the Scots.⁴³ “For Infidels being rational Creatures, as well as other men are,” asserted Robert Ferguson, “they are thereupon Sociable, as well as they, and consequently capable of entering into Societies, and agreeing upon Laws for the Government of them; and indeed to have

³⁹ McPhail, “Through a Glass, Darkly,” 140.

⁴⁰ McPhail, 139.

⁴¹ Not many dwelled on the logistical problems created by endowing the Tule with rights to land in the Darien. According to *res nullius*, the Tule could only claim ownership over the land—and hence have the right to give it away—if they had occupied and planted the Darien. Yet, the Scottish rhetoric of improvement indicted the Tule precisely because they failed to improve the landscape. Either the Tule were the owners (and due all the rights of Europeans), or they had no claims to the land and could not barter with the Scots. Indeed, most arguments employing *res nullius* (either overtly or implicitly) argued that the Indigenous peoples had rights only to the small pieces of land they used for their subsistence. The Scottish argument, giving the Tule dominion over the Darien, was an aberration in this respect. Pagden, “The Struggle for Legitimacy,” 45-46.

⁴² Ferguson, *A Just and Modest Vindication*, 73.

⁴³ Gallup-Diaz, “Tule Interactions with the Scots,” 16.

Governours and to be Governed.”⁴⁴ The Tule, as rational subjects eager to adopt civilized ways, were to become not only willing beneficiaries of the new Scottish empire but also eager apprentices to European civility. This was best seen in the poetry of the period. Pennecuik’s *Caledonia Triumphans* fabricated for King William a vivid image of the first contact between the Tule and the Scots:

Your valiant SCOTS their Colours did display,
 Into the *Western World*, where they did meet,
 Thousands of Welcomes prostrate at their Feet.
 The Sovereign [sic] Director was their Guide,
Neptune them favor’d; Earth, Seas, Wind and Tyde.
 The Natives made their Joyes ring to the Skyes,
 And them ador’d as Demi-deitys.
 Kind harmless Heathens, whome through time we vow,
 To train good Subjects both to GOD and You.⁴⁵

Another poet implored the Scots to acknowledge God’s hand in bringing the Tule to a tenuous, unexpected civility:

He sooth’d the *Natives* savage Breasts,
 and thaw’d them to *Humanity*
 almost like *Christian Charity*;
 They whom they dreaded worse than *Beasts*,
 Joyn all as Brethren in their *Jovial Feasts*,

 Their *Land* they freely did Resign,
 and all the *Treasures* of their Soil,
 and frankly bear a share’t’h’Toil,
 To carry on the Great Design,
 And, For their *Common Interest*, both Combine.⁴⁶

To be civilized in the Scottish mind was closely linked to the ability to be ruled.⁴⁷ The Tule appeared in both passages as inferior yet relieved subjects awaiting the aid of the

⁴⁴ Ferguson, *A Just and Modest Vindication*, 74.

⁴⁵ Pennecuik, *Caledonia Triumphans*.

⁴⁶ *An Ode Made on the Welcome News*.

⁴⁷ This association between civility and stability had deep roots in Scotland. Note the use of civility in the following comment by James VI of Scotland. “As for the Hie-lands, I shortly comprehend them all in two sorts of people: the one, that dwelleth in our maine land, that are barbarous for the most part, and yet mixed with some shewe of ciuilitie: the other, that dwelleth in the Isles, and are alluterly barbares, without any sort

Scots. The Scots, in contrast, were represented as the anointed saviours whom God guided to the shores of the Darien in order to bring religion and humanity to the suffering Tule.⁴⁸ The design of trading overseas had been initially conceived as a way to cure the immoralities that raged in Scotland. By the time Scots had embarked for Caledonia, this impulse to trade had been crystallized by poetry and popular literature into the ideal of civil and Christian rulers creating civil and Christian subjects through trade.⁴⁹

Caledonians, like most contemporary Europeans, measured civility by evaluating cultural markers of difference such as clothing, customs, religion and trading acumen.⁵⁰ Because assessments of sophistication were rooted in customs instead of complexion, it was possible for Europeans to believe that foreign peoples could be brought to civility by inculcating them with European customs and culture. As we shall see shortly, Scots travelers saw trade—or, to be precise, the appreciation for European goods and knowledge—as evidence of the Tule’s capacity to recognize the benefits of civilization. For the Scots, this was a testament to the Tule ability to become civil and dependable subjects in a Scottish empire. However, the dynamism of the European concept of civility should not be overstated. For although it was theoretically possible for Europeans to submit to the lure of foreign cultures, for the most part contact narratives stressed the

of shew of ciuilitie. For the first sort, put straitly to execution the Lawes made already by me against their Ouer-lords, and the chieffes of their Clannes, and it will be no difficultie to danton [to subdue by force] them. As for the other sort, follow forth the course that I haue intended, in planting Colonies among them of answerable In-lands subjects, that within short time may reforme and ciuilize the best inclined among them; rooting out or transporting the barbarous and stubborne sort, and planting ciuilitie in their rooms.” Judgments of civility in this early period clearly related to the ability of the subject to be managed and controlled by the Crown. James VI and I, “Basilikon Doron,” *The Political Works of James I*, Charles Howard McIlwain, (New York : Russell & Russell, 1965), 22.

⁴⁸ Indeed, Pennecuik later deplored the Spanish attempt to convert the Tule: “Their Cruelties were Catholick indeed, / Not Christian, to poor *Indians* and their Seed. / But those they call Hereticks of our Nation. / We hope will shew a meeker Reformation.” Pennecuik, *Caledonia Triumphans*.

⁴⁹ J.H. Elliot argues that this desire to bring civility and Christianity to the Aboriginal peoples was prevalent in the early stages of both English and Spanish empire. John H. Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 66.

⁵⁰ See Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-century British Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 92.

hardiness and natural superiority of European identities.⁵¹ In this way, European judgments of Aboriginal civility reified the subject as somehow inferior and, in doing so, aided in the definition of what was essential and special about the person making the judgments.

Scots settlers arrived in the Darien laden down with stereotypes about the Tule people whom they were to engage as partners in empire. Lionel Wafer, whose descriptions of the Tule touched upon religion, dress, diet, character, and gender relations, played a particularly influential role in shaping Scottish preconceptions.⁵² In general, he portrayed the Tule as technologically ignorant. Yet they possessed a fount of natural reason which allowed them to immediately appreciate the value of European knowledge and goods. Two particular enactments of this image of the Tule are worth recounting. The first occurred when the surgeon and buccaneer was confronted by the “primitive” practice of Tule medicine.

When one of the wives of Lacenta, the great Prince of the Tule (see Figure 4),⁵³ took ill the local healers decided to cure her illness by bleeding. They planned to use a small bow and arrow which a Tule healer would shoot into the afflicted patient’s arm repeatedly until a vein was struck (see Figure 5).⁵⁴ Wafer’s description of the intended treatment was laced with uneasiness at the haphazard and inconsistent nature of the cure, even as he admitted that the arrows were shaped so that they did not penetrate further

⁵¹ Wheeler’s analysis of Daniel Defoe’s novel *Captain Singleton* argues that European identity was less malleable than that of Americans or Africans. She comments: “A notion of identity expressed through one’s accessories is at odds with another assumption fostered in the novel—that European masculine identity possesses a core that remains untouched by intensive commercial and colonial contact.” Wheeler, 122.

⁵² In the second questionnaire Robert Wodrow dispatched to the Darien, he mentioned that the travel narratives of Wafer and Dampier were standard shipboard reading for those heading to the Darien. Robert Wodrow, *Early Letters of Robert Wodrow, 1698-1709*, ed. L.W. Sharpe (Edinburgh, T. and A. Constable, 1937), 79.

⁵³ Image found in Lionel Wafer, *A New Voyage and Description of the Isthmus of America, Giving an Account of the Author's Abode There*, EEBO (1698), 140.

⁵⁴ Image found in Wafer, 28.

than an English lancet. According to Wafer, success in lancing the vein was met with wondrous spectacle: “they will leap and skip about, shewing many Antick Gestures, by way of rejoicing and triumph.”⁵⁵ Wafer, “perceiving their Ignorance,” stepped in to show them the proper method of bleeding. After binding her upper arm with bark, Wafer carefully inserted a lancet. Lacenta, who saw a great well of blood suddenly rush from his wife’s arm, threatened to kill Wafer if his wife failed to recover. Wafer recorded his reaction: “I was not moved, but desired him to be patient, and I drew off about 12 Ounces, and bound up her Armd, and desired she might rest the next Day: By which means the Fever abated.”⁵⁶ The trope of emotional aboriginal versus reasoned and confident European was exquisitely expressed in Wafer’s description of the bleeding. Following the miraculous recovery of Lacenta’s wife, Wafer found the whole village well disposed to him. “This gained me so much Reputation,” Wafer observed, “that *Lacenta* came to me, and before all his Attendants, bowed, and kiss’d my Hand. Then the rest came thick about me, and some kissed my Hand, others my Knee, and some my Foot...I was carried from Plantation to Plantation, and lived in great Splendor and Repute, administering both Physick and Phelebotomy to those that wanted.”⁵⁷

The example of Wafer, Lacenta, and the lancet connoted the ease with which the Tule could be encouraged to appreciate and reward European knowledge.⁵⁸ However, astute Scots might have worried that Wafer success (and hence his safety) was heavily dependent upon his good luck. The failure to cure Lacenta’s wife might have brought an

⁵⁵ Wafer, 28.

⁵⁶ Wafer, 29.

⁵⁷ Wafer, 29-30.

⁵⁸ For a brief discussion of the English belief that Aboriginal desire for Western medicines was an implicit recognition of European superiority see Joyce Chaplin, *Subject Matter: Technology, the Body and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier, 1500-1676* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 184-185. She also notes that the rejection of European treatments could be read as evidence of the ‘uncivilized’ nature of the Indigenous peoples in question.

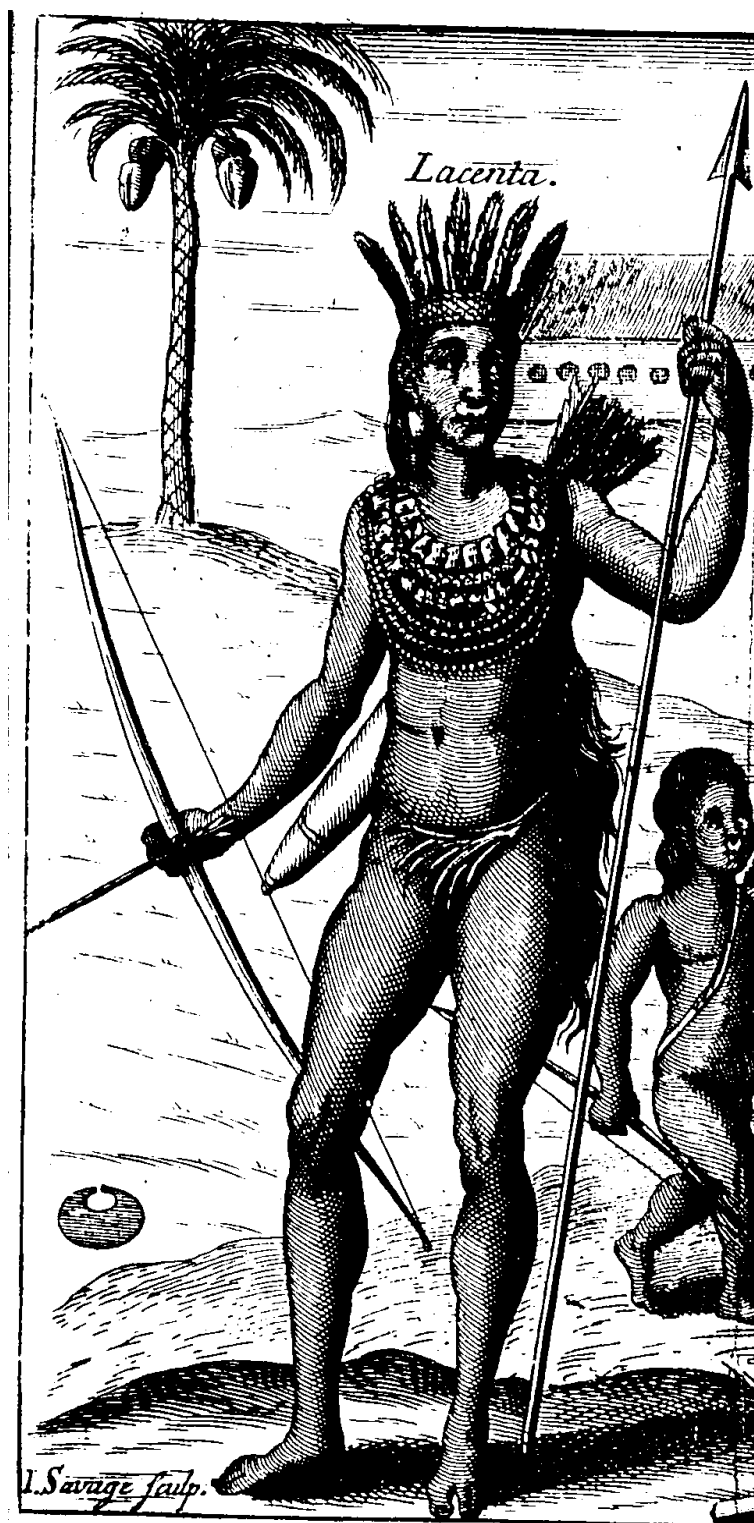


Figure 4: The Tule Leader Lacenta



The Savage's Journal. The Indians manner of Bloodletting. Page 28

Figure 5: The Tule Method of Drawing of Blood

unpleasant end to Wafer's time in the Darien and permanently jeopardized the Tule's respect for European knowledge. Nevertheless, for most Scots Wafer's success suggested the usefulness of reciprocity as a tool for creating stability and co-operation in the Darien. He lived in opulent wealth, at least by Tule standards, and they derived the benefit of Western medicine and technology. Wafer's experiences were also notable in that they offered hope to the Scots that the Tule could be brought to civility—which was perceived as a vital step towards their trustworthiness—if only their natural ignorance and mercurial temper could be overcome. But Wafer's narrative also indicated a belief in the Tule's eagerness for European trade goods, especially clothing. He noted that the men went almost naked while the women wore a cotton cloth that hung down to their knees. But Wafer said that clothing was a very valued commodity among the Tule, enthusing that “nothing will oblige the Women more than to give them Cloaths, especially of Gaudy colours.”⁵⁹ Moving onto his description of men's fashions, Wafer was quick to note that men also saw the innate value in clothing: “if any of them had an old Shirt given him by any of us, he would be sure to wear it, and strut about at no ordinary rate.”⁶⁰ Again, Wafer appealed to both the ignorance and natural reason of the Tule. Clothing was valued by the Tule variously for its intrinsic beauty, its utility, and—given its scarcity—the social capital it conferred to the wearer. Yet, for the self-assured European observer there was certainly an element of the comical in the description of the Tule strutting around with macho bravado in second-hand European clothing. For Scots readers the

⁵⁹ Wafer, *A New Voyage and Description of the Isthmus of America*, 140.

⁶⁰ Wafer, 141.

Tule appeared as perfect “Allies and Confederates”⁶¹: open to European goods and ideas, but needing instruction in their proper use and meaning.

Before we leave the pamphlet literature to examine the Scot-Tule relationship as it was enacted in the Darien we ought to quickly revisit the outline of colonial life presented in a *History of Caledonia*. Although poets and pamphleteers had idealized the Tule as eager Scottish allies, descriptions of Tule customs conveyed unease and even outright disdain for the emotionalism and irrationality which marked their daily lives. The Tule lacked that “elegance of behavior” which Europeans considered the ultimate mark of civility.⁶² In Daniel Defoe’s novel *Captain Singleton* (1720), Wheeler notes that participation in trade conferred civility upon the Africans encountered by Singleton. Unfortunately, this was usually an ephemeral equality since improper clothing and a failure to comprehend worth in European terms ensured that these Africans “remain[ed] savages.”⁶³ Scots also struggled with the notion that there was something indelibly exotic about the Tule that no amount of trade could cure. The Scots were apt to note that Tule music was unrefined, lacking tune or rhythm. When the Caledonians were escorted to the King, they were accompanied by musicians playing on reed pipes. But the Scots took little solace or honour from this, noting that “they made a kind of whining noise, but nothing Musical to European Ears, all the Company to keep Confort [sic], made a humming at the same time to themselves.”⁶⁴

Foul music also held the latent threat of Devil worship and witchcraft. It was a common belief among Europeans that witches’ Sabbaths indulged the devil by creating a

⁶¹General Assembly, *Letter from the Commission of the General Assembly*, 11.

⁶²Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race*, 103.

⁶³Wheeler, 117.

⁶⁴A Gentleman Lately Arriv’d, *The History of Caledonia*, 26.

harsh and unpleasant music.⁶⁵ The following description of Panawing—a form of prophecy practiced by the Tule—echoed descriptions of witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland. Shrieking, hissing, barking, and croaking by the panawaners was joined with the sound of crashing stones and bamboo drums to create a terrible cacophony designed to call up prophecies. “The great Enemy of mankind and lover of discord,” observed the pamphleteer with disdain, “invited by such jarring Musick, at last visibly appears and gives his Answer, which for the most part proves exactly true, that he may the better delude these poor Creatures, who stand in great awe of him.”⁶⁶ For Scots readers who lived during the 1690s, a decade of heightened paranoia about witchcraft and its threat to the godly elect, the resemblance of Tule customs to witchcraft may have been especially frightening.⁶⁷ Thus, although the pamphlet literature was generally quite positive in its treatment of the Tule, the immoral ecstasies of their religious practices combined with their lack of taste contributed to stereotypes about aboriginal emotionalism and irrationality. These stereotypes would gain increasing prominence as events in the Darien began to play out against Scottish interests.

Over time, cultural interactions in the Darien proved to the Scots that Europeans possessed some inalienable quality to which the Tule could aspire, but never fully attain. The ability to maintain this ongoing search for civility, was based in the Early Modern distinction between the self—“self-conscious subjects”—and the person—“socially

⁶⁵ Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: the Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 30-31, 90-91.

⁶⁶ A Gentleman Lately Arriv'd, *The History of Caledonia*, 24-25.

⁶⁷ The Presbyterian establishment—fearing the dissolution of Scottish godliness in the face of growing English power, Episcopalian intriguing, and raging sin—had embarked on a campaign to reestablish moral order throughout the nation. Tensions exploded in 1697 with the conviction and burning of seven witches in Renfrew. Paranoia was still widespread in 1699 when the General Assembly saw fit to formulate a new Act against witchcraft. Ian Bostridge, *Witchcraft and its Transformations, c.1650-c.1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 23-24, 31.

constructed identities.” Richard White explains how this difference was conceived in European societies:

Individuals as selves—as self-aware, individualized unions of souls and bodies—were all equal in the sense that they all possessed equivalently immortal souls. Individuals as persons, however, were radically unequal. They were ranked. Among Europeans, to stress selves was to stress equality; to stress persons was to stress inequality.⁶⁸

The Scots, as we shall see, maintained that the Tule were subjects capable of the same innate reason found among all humans. Yet they undermined this claim by suggesting that Tule culture was in many ways inferior. The General Assembly portrayed this relationship between two rational, yet unequal, peoples as providentially ordained and ordered the Caledonians to bring the Word of God to the Tule. “The Lord seems, in a peculiar Manner, to have Designed *your Plantation*, as its most glorious end; To Propagate the Light of his Gospel amongst them,” wrote the General Assembly, “[for] ‘tis by their Consent that God confirms your Right, therefore Cherish them, as your Brethren, of the same Blood and Kindred in *Adam*.”⁶⁹ As brethren the Scots and the Tule shared the natural faculty to appreciate God’s works, reason. Yet their relationship remained radically unequal; the Scots were a “People of great Expectation” exporting the word to the “blind *Heathen*.”⁷⁰ To fulfill their potential as self-conscious subjects the Tule had to submit their persons to Scottish tutelage. Captain Pennycook captured the spirit of this paradox in the following discussion of Captain Andreas:

The Spaniards believing he might be usefull to them, made him a Captⁿ by giving him a Stick tipt with Silver, upon which he values himself above others... Yet the

⁶⁸ White’s comment should be not be held as prescriptive, rather a description of a common state of affairs. Richard White, “Although I Am Dead, I Am Not Entirely Dead. I Have Left A Second of Myself”: Constructing Self and Persons on the Middle Ground of Early America,” in *Through a Glass Darkly: Reflections on Personal Identity in Early America*, ed. Ronald Hoffman, Fredrika J. Teute, Mechal Sobel (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 414.

⁶⁹ General Assembly, *Letter from the Commission of the General Assembly*, 11.

⁷⁰ General Assembly, 9, 4.

Love of ones Country and Liberty is so Naturall that we have good reason to believe that as soone (being a very sensible and cunning Fellow) as he finds we are able to protect him, he will heartily joyne To our Interest.⁷¹

The principle that the Tule shared a natural reason with the Scots did not undermine the Scottish attempt to subordinate the Tule. Instead it reinforced this hierarchical relationship by compelling the Scots to see the Tule as desirous of spiritual and material aid. This yearning was best expressed in Scottish assessments of Tule clothing and comportment.

Karen Kupperman believes that the English in North America regarded both clothing and comportment as key indices of Aboriginal sophistication.⁷² Early Modern Europe was awash in manuals instructing the gentry in the finer points of posture and comportment. “The shape and presentation of the body,” Kupperman contended, “reflected the reality of the inner self.”⁷³ The Scots also believed that accessories and clothing played a key role in maintaining social hierarchy. In response to the “disgraceful deserting” of New Caledonia, a pamphlet was produced petitioning Scotland’s parliament to sanction a day of national fasting as atonement for God’s clear displeasure with the Scottish people. *The Sighs and Groans of a Sinking Kingdom* laid out a comprehensive list of domestic sins that should be remedied immediately, among which was the failure to tailor clothing appropriately to hierarchy. They demanded: “The Regulating of WEARING APPAREL in *both Sexes*, and in *every Station*, That (besides its Christian Decency) when a PERSON OF QUALITY, and Men of *Lower Rank*, when a LADY and

⁷¹ Insh, “Captain Pennycook’s Journal from the Madera Islands to New Caledonia in Darien,” *Darien Shipping Papers*, 85.

⁷² Karen Kupperman, *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 43.

⁷³ Kupperman, 46.

a *Common Hussy* appears in our Streets, we may know *which* is *which*.”⁷⁴ Early Modern Scots feared the blurring of status boundaries that clothing could produce. Clothing was not merely an affected persona during the Early Modern era, donned and then shed with the outfit: rather, Early Moderns believed clothing could effect long-lasting changes in persona. “Once a role was taken up, and one’s outward aspect tailored for the part, a person’s actions were subtly moulded to its demands.”⁷⁵ Apparel, as the Scottish example suggests, was imbued with political and religious significance. For the authors of the petition, clothing symbolized relative levels of personal status and modesty. In the colonial context clothing also had these multiple meanings. Kupperman has argued that both the English and the Indians associated European clothing with Christianity. It was believed that dressing as a Christian could move one to act like a Christian.⁷⁶ Clothing had the effect of cementing existing hierarchical and political relationships in the form of physical accessories, and thereby stabilizing identities which could be unsettlingly fluid. This was especially important for Scots trying to treat with Tule groups that were, by European standards, only loosely organized.

Ignacio Gallup-Diaz commented that an alliance with Captain Andreas—an independent Tule leader who was master of his own lands—formed the linchpin for the Scottish claim to the Darien.⁷⁷ Upon first meeting Andreas, Captain Pennycook closely examined his clothing for evidence of his political allegiances, his character, and his rank. Captain Pennycook remarked, “In his Garb [he] affects the Spaniard as alsoe in the Gravity of his carriage. He had a red loose Stuff coat on with an old hatt and a pair of

⁷⁴ *The Sighs and Groans of a Sinking Kingdom in an Humble Address to the Parliament of Scotland*, EEBO (London: 1700), 1, 10.

⁷⁵ Kupperman, “*Indians and English*,” 71.

⁷⁶ Kupperman, 71. This was primarily a perceptual issue for Europeans. In practice, Aboriginals used European clothing in ways that suited their cultural needs.

⁷⁷ Gallup-Diaz, “Tule Interactions with the Scots,” 16.

Drawers, but noe Shoes or Stockings.”⁷⁸ Hugh Rose, whose official diary of the expedition for the Company borrowed heavily from Pennycook’s descriptions, offered a detailed expansion on Pennycook’s comments. After he described Andreas, Rose turned his attention to his followers. “Those that were with him,” Rose noted, “were stark naked, only a threed tyed round their middles to make fast another to that kept on a small peece of plate upon the end of their yeards, made either of silver or of a certain leafe of a tree.”⁷⁹ Aside from adding ethnographic detail to the encounter, Rose’s official description established Andreas’ status as a leader. For the Directors of the Company reading the report, this detail would have legitimized any alliances made with Andreas by the Caledonians.

Scots accounts eagerly established the Tule’s desire for good manners. James Wallace reported that their arrival among the Tule had been heralded by prophecy: “They told us we were very welcome, and that by prediction they had expected us these two years, for they say two years ago it was foretold them that a people should come and live amongst them, that would treat them civilly and teach them good manners.”⁸⁰ Good manners, as it happened, were rather easily dispensed by the Scots in the form of clothing. “The men are generally very civil and sagacious,” Wallace reported in a later diary entry, “they us’d to go naked, but are now as well cloath’d as our selves.” The Tule were not only eager to adopt Scots’ fashions but other Scottish symbols as well. Following a description of each Captain and his territory, Wallace concluded that “they are all very much our friends and fond of us...Some of these Captains wear the Scots flag

⁷⁸ Insh, “Captain Pennycook’s Journal,” *Darien Shipping Papers*, 81.

⁷⁹ John Burton, “Mr. Rose’s Journal,” 64. In general, the Rose diary pays more attention to clothing than Pennycook. Compare also to Insh, “Captain Pennycook’s Journal,” *Darien Shipping Papers*, 88. And Burton, “Mr. Rose’s Journal,” *The Darien papers*, 70.

⁸⁰ Insh, “A Journal kept from Scotland by one of the Company who sailed on board the ‘Endeavor’ pink; with a short account of Darien,” *Darien Shipping Papers*, 74.

in their Canoas.”⁸¹ Through the distribution of clothing and accessories, the Scots not only hoped to confer civility upon the Tule; they also looked to cement their political alliance with them.⁸²

The Tule’s acceptance of Scottish gifts of clothing and accessories was often considered evidence that they had agreed to become subjects of a Caledonian state. For example, when Pennycook and the Councillors of the first colony discovered that Andreas was acting as a Spanish informant they urged him to join with the Scots instead. Andreas was reluctant to do so because the Spanish had convinced him that the Scots were privateers looking to settle down briefly before moving on. “[A]s soon as we were gone,” Andreas feared that “they would destroy both him and his.”⁸³ The Scots argued strenuously that they were committed to settling in the Darien for a long time to come. “[H]e was fully satisfy’d,” according to Pennycook, “and desired we would give him a Commission and receive him and his people into our Protection; which if we did, he would give us all his Right to this part of the Countrey.”⁸⁴ When the vital agreement that would turn Andreas into a Captain for the Scottish Aboriginal forces had been finalized a few days later, the Scots added one final incentive for his allegiance: “[The Commission] was deliver’d to him with a broad basket-hilted sword and a pair of Pistolls, with which

⁸¹ Insh, “A Journal kept from Scotland,” *Darien Shipping Papers*, 75-76.

⁸² Clothing and accessories were used throughout the British Empire to forge political alliances across cultures and to create indigenous “Captains.” In patronizing these figures, the British often sidestepped pre-existing political structures and creating new avenues to power in indigenous communities. Even where this was not the case British patronage often required a degree of cultural reorganization to accommodate the new goods and altered responsibilities which followed an alliance. See the case of the Chickahominy of Virginia whose allegiance to James I allowed to community to remain intact, but required the community to alter its manner of dress and shift its trading focus towards Jamestown. Kupperman, *Indians and English*, 72. The use of clothing would prove to be a ubiquitous part of creating allegiances with aboriginal groups during the European exploration of North America, especially in relation to the fur trade. For the practice of creating “trading chiefs” and “trading captains” among young aboriginal men in the Columbia Plateau during the nineteenth century see Elizabeth Vibert, *Traders’ Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Columbian Plateau, 1807-1846* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 200, 249-252.

⁸³ Insh, “Captain Pennycook’s Journal,” *Darien Shipping Papers*, 91.

⁸⁴ Insh, “Captain Pennycook’s Journal,” *Darien Shipping Papers*, 91.

he solemnly promis'd to defend us to the last drop of his Blood against all our Enemies.”⁸⁵ Through the profferment of weapons and a captaincy, Pennycook believed that he had engaged Andreas and his people as loyal and grateful subordinates under the protection of Caledonia. But if one looks at Rose’s account of the event there is evidence to suggest that the Tule had a far different understanding of the events which transpired. In Rose’s account, when the sword and pistols were presented to Andreas, he reciprocated with his own “token of his kindness and friendship”: a bow with arrows.⁸⁶ It appears likely that Andreas did not believe he was rendering himself subservient to the Scots but rather engaging them in an agreement guaranteeing mutual defence in case of Spanish attacks. Pennycook’s failure to mention this reciprocal exchange fits Gallup-Diaz’s assessment of his personal ambitions to be a “Scottish Cortes” who would “bind Darien” and turn it into an outpost of Scottish power overseas.⁸⁷

In general, Caledonians believed that clothing and accessories, when worn or used, had a stabilizing and ordering effect upon the Tule. Prior to the battle of Toubacanti, Lieutenant Turnbull was placed in command of the Tule levies lead by Captain Pedro.⁸⁸ His summary of Captain Pedro’s appearance was curt but telling: “he was in good order having an fain [fine] Coat on him yt [that] ye [the] Company of Scotland had formerly sent him.”⁸⁹ Following the battle, the Scots chose to elevate several of the Tule in recognition of their service to the Scots. “Some Indians signalized

⁸⁵ Insh, “Captain Pennycook’s Journal,” *Darien Shipping Papers*, 91.

⁸⁶ Burton, “Mr. Rose’s Journal,” *The Darien papers*, 73.

⁸⁷ Gallup-Diaz, “Tule Interactions with the Scots,” 16.

⁸⁸ Toubacanti was a hill over six miles inland from the Scottish colony of New Caledonia. In February 1700, 200 Caledonians and 60 Tule levies defeated a fortified force of Spaniards. This crippled Spanish plans for a land assault to throw the Scots out of New Caledonia. See Insh also for the illustration of the battle drawn from Captain Campbell’s notes on page 193. Insh, *The Company of Scotland*, 188-193.

⁸⁹ J.J. Spencer, “Some Darien Letters,” *Scottish Historical Review* (1914), 11, 407.

themselves,” Shields wrote, “so that it was thought they merited a reward; and therefore a poor naked fellow, that was very brave, was made a Captain, and honored with a scarlet coat, and hat with tracin, and named Captain Alexander.”⁹⁰ Shields dramatized the impact of the reward by situating the unnamed Tule man in a culturally and physically impoverished state prior to receiving his reward. Captain Alexander was a man without clothing, without a name, and without a culture. But Alexander did possess one of the building blocks of European colonial civility: masculine bravery.⁹¹ Alexander’s meritorious actions entitled him not only to physical clothing in the European style, but also to a European name and identity.

The absence of clothing among the Tule was also a cause for observation and consternation. The ministers of the second expedition had been charged with Christianizing the Tule, yet they found themselves too busy ministering to their own flock to find much time for the Tule. But on one short foray into the wilderness the ministers were shocked to find Aborigines living as their ancestors did. “We find them a poor naked People,” remarked the ministers, “living as we use to say from hand to mouth, being very idle and lazy and not industrious, peaceable and friendly to those that use them kindly but very revengeful and covetous.”⁹² For Early Modern Britons, living naked signified the absence of complex culture. Having little more than nature for culture, it was assumed that they were vulnerable to, or easily swayed by, European customs and teachings.⁹³ The ministers later remarked on the positive and negative consequences of the Tule’s cultural simplicity. They were encouraged that several of the Tule were

⁹⁰ Burton, “From the Revd. Alexander Shields,” *The Darien Papers*, 251.

⁹¹ See Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race*, 103.

⁹² Francis Borland, *Memoirs of Darien: Giving a Short Description of that Country*, ECCO (Glasgow: 1715), 56.

⁹³ Kupperman, *Indians and English*, 50.

entranced by the solemnity of the Sunday Sermon. “They knew not at first our distinction of the Lords Day from other days,” wrote the ministers, “and so came with their fruit and trade to sell, but now some of them have learned that we keep such a Day, and several of them come to our Sermons to see our Fashion, and carry themselves very decently.”⁹⁴ But the ministers despaired that they would acquire few converts because of the corrupting example set by the Caledonian settlers. “[T]he first of our Language they learn is Cursing and Swearing, and they have frequently complained of our Peoples going out, and stealing and robbing from them: So that in little time we shall make ourselves and our Religion both odious to them.”⁹⁵ Both instances demonstrated the ease with which the Tule could be swayed. Although initially perceived as rude and uncivilized, they had a natural aptitude that could be moulded for propriety given the proper influences.

The notion that Aboriginal cultures were ‘naked’ or uncultured played an indispensable role in Caledonian relationships with the Tule. The ease with which the Tule were swayed by Scottish goods suggested to some Scots that clothing alone would not ensure the strong familial loyalties that they desired from the Tule. There was no guarantee that the Tule would not simply shed their Scottish clothing, and thus their alliances, after they had left the boundaries of Caledonia.⁹⁶ The counsellors of the second expedition observed that the Tule were playing the Scots like fools: “And whereas there were ample accounts given of the natives being at war, and that they were our fast friends, wee find two of their Captains...with silver headed staves, as Spanish Captains, willing, notwithstanding, to goe with us and plunder the Spaniards, as noe doubt they

⁹⁴ Borland, *Memoirs of Darien*, 56.

⁹⁵ Borland, 56.

⁹⁶ This was observed to be common practice among the Narragansetts. Kupperman, *Indians and English*, 72.

would do us, if the Spaniards would help them.”⁹⁷ Like many Europeans during this time, the Scots wanted to encompass the Tule as persons within a ranked Scottish society. “Ranked positions,” argues Richard White, “involved a set of appropriate feelings—honor, subordination, resignation—and [Europeans] saw as part of the colonial task the creation of such feelings among Indian peoples.”⁹⁸ He demonstrates this point by citing the struggle of the French to get Indian murderers to beg for pardons from the French Governor.

In a ranked society...the shaping of self depended on subjecting one’s will to that of a superior. In the case of murder among the French, when one’s own will had been overwhelmed by passions, to seek pardon was to recognize that one’s very life depended on the will of the king. Securing such a pardon depended on the rational cultivation and expression of proper feelings.⁹⁹

To ensure the stability of their Tule allies, the Scots turned to education. Naturally, it would be the Scots who played the part of teachers inculcating civility through example and instruction. The Tule were to be the assiduous students of European, but more particularly Scottish, culture.

During the brief tenure of the settlement, Scots forces in the Darien were continually threatened by Spanish forces. Authorities in Scotland and in Caledonia were well aware that the success or failure of their enterprise depended upon maintaining their alliance with the Tule. Scotland’s tenuous geo-political hold on the Darien ensured that violence was consistently discouraged by both authorities in Scotland and Caledonians. In a letter written in April, 1699, the directors stridently encouraged the Scots to

⁹⁷ Burton, “Letter from the Council to the Directors: On board of the *Rising Sun*, in Caledonia Bay, 23d December, 1699,” *The Darien Papers*, 215.

⁹⁸ White, “Although I Am Dead, I Am Not Entirely Dead,” 414.

⁹⁹ White, 414.

“cultivate and improve” their friendship with the Tule by “obliging the [Tule] people by acts of tenderness and justice.”¹⁰⁰ Unlike the English, the Scots in the Darien never tried to justify violence as a natural element of a hierarchical relationship of parent and child, or master and servant.¹⁰¹ “It is as much,” explained the Virginian colonist William Strachey in 1622, “as if a father should be said to offer violence to his child, when he beats him, to bring him to goodness.”¹⁰² Strachey’s approach to education was impossible for Scots who were already facing intense Spanish pressure to leave the Darien.

Lieutenant Turnbull, testifying before the Directors about a heated exchange with James Byres, made the Scottish dependence on the Tule absolutely unequivocal:

Mr. Byres said that these fellows (meaning the Indians) should be hang’d; and that upon his expressing several other slighting words about them, he, the said Lievt. Turnbull expostulated with him [Byres] about the usefulness of the Indians’ friendship, that he never knew any of them [to] prove treacherous to the Colony, and if once they begin to maltreat the Indians in any such rough and disobliging manner, they must resolve to go never thereafter without the bounds of their Fort.¹⁰³

Strachey’s belief that violence towards the Powhantans of Virginia was natural was just one way that a hierarchical relationship could define European responsibilities to a subject Aboriginal population. Scots, aware of their tenuous situation, tried to win the allegiance of the Tule through their peaceful and respectful prosecution of empire. A letter sent to the colony in June, 1699 by the General Assembly urged the Scots to act as moral exemplars because it would encourage the Tule to see the benefits and attractions of civility. “By any Means, by continual Converse, endeavor to Civilize them,” urged the

¹⁰⁰ Burton, “Dispatches and Letters from the Directors to the Council at the Colony: Edinburgh, the 15th day of April, 1699,” *The Darien Papers*, 127.

¹⁰¹ Melanie Perrault, “‘To Fear and To Love Us’: Intercultural Violence in the English Atlantic,” *Journal of World History*, 17 (2006).

¹⁰² Quoted in Perrault.

¹⁰³ Burton, “Examination Before a Committee of Directors: Edinburgh, 11 July, 1701,” *The Darien Papers*, 227.

General Assembly, “and cultivate any Principles of Natural Understanding, and Reason, they have, which will indeed require great Prudence, and Dexterity in the management: And when they see Piety, Sincerity and Equality Flourishing among You; it will be the most Effectual, and endearing Tye to Knit them to your Interest.”¹⁰⁴

Caledonians also attempted to teach some of the Tule children the basics of Scottish life and culture. The *History of Caledonia* (1699) depicted the voyage of Caledonian leaders from the first colony to meet with a powerful Aboriginal ‘king’. During this trip, the king and the Scots, led by William Paterson, forged an agreement to support each other as long as “*Gold and Floods were in Darien.*”¹⁰⁵ The Tule nobility offered the Scots several of their sons as a token of their intention to be faithful to their agreement. These boys were to be tutored in the ways of Scottish life and were “to Learn the *Scottish Language.*”¹⁰⁶ The dramatic account of their return to Caledonia stressed the role the children would play in the newly arranged alliance between the Tule and the Scots:

Never were a People so caressed, tears of Joy standing in every bodies eyes; and there was a great striving among them about getting the Education of the *Indian* Boys, who in so short a time had most of them learned a great many words of our Language. So that it's not to be doubted but in a short time they will attain the Perfection of it, as some of our Little ones will do of theirs, who are speedily to be sent to remain with the *Indians*, according to the Agreement in the League, which it's hoped will prove as advantageous to *Scotland*, as that made between *Charlemain* and King *Achaius.*¹⁰⁷

The exchange of children between the Tule and the Scots was an enactment of the Scottish dream for an empire built upon the cooperation of indigenous peoples with the Scots. It also exemplified the attitude that the spread of empire could bring mutual, if not

¹⁰⁴General Assembly, *Letter from the Commission of the General Assembly*, 11.

¹⁰⁵ Italics in original.

¹⁰⁶ A Gentleman Lately Arriv'd, *The History of Caledonia*, 34, 43.

¹⁰⁷ A Gentleman Lately Arriv'd, *The History of Caledonia*, 51.

equivalent, intellectual and cultural edification to those involved.¹⁰⁸ For readers, the speed with which the young Tule boys picked up the Scottish tongue demonstrated their natural aptitude for civilization. It is intriguing that the author chose to explain the meaning of the Tule-Scot alliance by drawing on the mythic relationship between the Scottish King Achaius and Charlemagne. According to this legend, the Emperor Charlemagne was eager to create a system of education for his empire. After concluding that Scotland was “the most learned of nations” Charlemagne engaged the Scottish King Achaius to provide him with intellectuals to educate the people of his empire.¹⁰⁹ The Scots saw education as a powerful means of sealing the friendship and political alliance the Tule and the Scots currently enjoyed.

The account of the Scot-Tule encounter in the Darien found in the *History of Caledonia* seems to have been a mixture of fact and legend. The Scots did indeed venture into the interior of the Isthmus, but no journals ever recorded William Paterson’s meeting with the king of the Tule. The legend of the Tule king had been bandied about in Europe, and it was found in both Wafer’s testimonial of Lacenta and the influential *History of the Buccaneers* by A.O. Esquemeling. The idea that a king-like figure ruled over the Darien added a great deal of geo-political tension to the Scottish expedition to the Isthmus of Darien. Upon hearing that the Scots wanted to settle in the region, the Spanish likely noticed the discomfiting parallels between the Scots expedition and the toppling of the Aztecs by Hernan Cortes during the sixteenth century. In both instances a few

¹⁰⁸ The instruction of Scottish young in language and custom of the Tule was likely undertaken with the pragmatic intent of creating a coterie of imperial actors learned in both Scottish culture and Tule beliefs. However, Wodrow’s queries indicate that the Scots were intellectually curious about the roots of Tule language and culture. He asked Patrick Smith to verify “if there has been observed any agreement between their language and our Irish or Highlands, or between the customes of both, as Wafer observes.” Wodrow, *Early Letters of Robert Wodrow*, 12-15, 78-80.

¹⁰⁹ John Burton, *The Scots Abroad* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1900), 1.

enterprising men had entered the region and found local Indigenous leaders predisposed to aiding their cause.¹¹⁰ The English were also apprehensive that the Scots would find an emperor or king who might aid their cause and legitimize their territorial claims. In 1697, while the Scots persuaded the merchants of Hamburg to invest in the Scottish Company, King William instructed his subjects in the city to discover the Company's hitherto secret destination. English investigators reported erroneously to the crown that the Scots had entered "into a League with the Prince there [Spanish America]" with the intent of attacking Spanish possessions.¹¹¹ Although English suspicions were groundless, they tapped into the same myth of a king or prince of the Darien that had excited the Scots. From the Scots perspective, a king would have added vital simplicity to the process of empire-building by allowing negotiation with one powerful voice, rather than dozens of smaller powers.

Almost as soon as they had landed the Scots were looking to meet with the king of the Tule. But their hopes of such a figure were immediately dashed. Frenchmen who had lived among the Tule leaders Pedro and Ambrosio informed the Scots that, "the storyes of King Rosa...were mere fables."¹¹² James Wallace, after questioning local Tule elders, concluded that the buccaneers invented this figure for their own purposes.¹¹³ Gallup-Diaz has contended that this information drastically altered the Scottish approach to the Darien. Expecting to entreat one king for access to any land and goods they desired on the isthmus, instead "the Scots found themselves thrust into a seventeenth-century

¹¹⁰ Christopher Storrs, "Disaster at Darien (1698-1700)? The Persistence of Spanish Imperial Power on the Eve of the Demise of the Spanish Habsburgs," *European History Quarterly* 29 (1999): 9.

¹¹¹ Insh, "Mr. Vernon's Line: Whitehall, 20th May, 1697," *Darien Shipping Papers*, 36.

¹¹² Insh, "Captain Pennycook's Journal," *Darien Shipping Papers*, 83.

¹¹³ Insh, "A Journal kept from Scotland," *Darien Shipping Papers*, 76.

contest for indigenous alliances.”¹¹⁴ This situation not only threatened the geo-political position of the Scots, it forced the Scots to court a multitude of Tule leaders with varying interests and sympathies.

Walter Harris, a surgeon on the first expedition, observed that factionalism among the Tule was intensified by their competition for European alliances. Only two months after they had arrived in the Darien, the Scots found themselves at the unsavory center of one of these feuds. New Caledonia had been erected in Captain Andreas’ territory, but his rival, Captain Ambrosio, worked hard to lure the Scots to shift their settlement to his land. During Christmas celebrations aboard the *St. Andrew*, Ambrosio “reproach’d him [Andreas] with his Villany” by pointing out “that he was still a *Spaniard* altho’ he took the Collony’s Commission.”¹¹⁵ Ambrosio’s insinuations provoked violence between the two parties, and Captain Pennycook’s crew had to intervene to prevent its escalation. But this was not the end of the confrontation. Although both sides made peace publicly, the next morning the Scots discovered that Captain Andreas had been “tumbl’d” into the ship’s hold. “Where lighting on a spare Anchor,” reported Harris, “He was so bruiz’d that he gave up the ghost soon afterwards.”¹¹⁶ And although nobody could be sure whether Andreas had been murdered, Harris said that the event was tinged with suspicions of foul play.¹¹⁷ In the short-term, Andreas’ death had little effect on the geo-political situation in the Darien. The Scots did not relocate to Ambrosio’s territory and Andreas was replaced without much fuss by his son, Captain Pedro.¹¹⁸ But this event indelibly marked Scottish

¹¹⁴ Gallup-Diaz, “Tule Interactions with the Scots,” 18.

¹¹⁵ James Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien Including an Answer to the Defence of the Scots Settlement There*, EEBO (1700), 60.

¹¹⁶ Hodges, 60.

¹¹⁷ For an analysis of this event in terms of geo-political tensions see Gallup-Diaz, “Tule Interactions with the Scots,” 20.

¹¹⁸ Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien*, 61.

perceptions of their new allies. Andreas' brutal death fertilized the belief that the Tule were unsuited to leadership, given to violence, and quick to anger.

History proved to be the grounds upon which this event was moved from isolated incident to general stereotype. When Scots discovered that there was no king of the Tule, they set about discovering if the Tule had ever been governed by one leader. According to James Wallace, the elders had informed him that the Tule had been without a king for at least forty years. Their last leader had abused his power and been killed for doing so. "The old men remember such a man," wrote Wallace, "they say he was a tyrant, [and] would take as many wives as he pleased and allow them but one, and therefore they cut him off."¹¹⁹ Pennycook's journal fleshed out the mysterious figure who supposedly led the Tule half a century earlier. This man's renown in opposing the Spanish was so great that the Tule made him "Commander in chief of all their united forces." But Pennycook's narrative quickly turned into a tale of horror:

But he had noe sooner got the Power into his hands, than he became a most dangerous and barbarous tyrant, and often for his Pleasure would cutt off the heads of his bravest and best Captains, and what yet troubl'd them more, he would suffer noe man besides himself to have more than one wife, which they by noe means would endure. Soe they set upon him in the night and murder'd him. Since which they have never allow'd any one to be greater than his Fellows.¹²⁰

For the Scots, this example hinted on several levels that the Tule were naturally unsuited to leadership. A tyrant's skill in combat was little guarantee of the ability to rule over a kingdom wisely. This message had special force for the Scots, since their expedition had been justified by the belief that trade, not war, was the foundation for a healthy empire. The tale also reinforced a growing perception of the Tule as irrational and prone to excessive emotional outbursts. For the Scots—whose Protestant faith prohibited

¹¹⁹ Insh, "A Journal kept from Scotland," *Darien Shipping Papers*, 76.

¹²⁰ Insh, "Captain Pennycook's Journal," *Darien Shipping Papers*, 84.

polygamy—it likely seemed absurd that the Tule would ignore the wanton killing of their fellows but be provoked into a murderous rage by a limit on the number of wives they could take.

The mercurial nature of Aboriginals had been discussed in the long letter from the General Assembly to the first settlers of New Caledonia. The Assembly counselled the settlers to pay close attention to their new allies. They warned that most indigenous nations were prone to acting “Suspicious and Jealous...Also most Revengeful, and Cruel, where they can be Masters, upon the Apprehension of the least injury done them.” They encouraged the Scots to be extremely careful in their dealings with the Tule. “There’s need, you be...Wise as Serpents, and Harmless as Doves: You are always to be very Watchful, and upon your Guard,” instructed the General Assembly, “[so] that you may prevent Surprizals, and be able to Defend your Selves, if they should take up any Prejudice, and Irritation, Groundlessly, against you.”¹²¹ The report of the tyrant king confirmed an existing belief in the militant yet irrational nature of the peoples in the Americas.

The example of Ambrosio and Nicola found later in Pennycook and Rose’s accounts re-invoked the same themes found in the story of the tyrant ruler. Ambrosio, the Scots were told by their French sources, was one of the most powerful leaders in the Darien region. He was of a “rough military temper” and would often take what he pleased from other leaders, offering only “slight pretenses” as an excuse. His temperament had earned him as much respect among the Tule as hatred. “[I]f they do not love him,” Rose noted, “they fear him.”¹²² As in the case of the tyrant, Ambrosio’s rampant disregard for

¹²¹ General Assembly, *Letter from the Commission of the General Assembly*, 11.

¹²² Burton, “Mr. Rose’s Journal,” *The Darien papers*, 69.

others had led his fellow Captains to contemplate killing him and replacing him with another Tule leader, Nicola. Nicola, “a man who speaks Spanish as well as a Naturall Spaniard,” had lived among Spaniards for twelve years of his childhood. His experience among Europeans had ensured that he had an intimate understanding of European politics and culture that far surpassed that of his fellow Captains. He was described as “wise and brave, and extreamely beloved by his people for his Justice and good nature.”¹²³ As a leader Nicola was a perfect counterpoint to the rough and aggressive Ambrosio. And yet he was still liable to uncontrollable emotional outbreaks.

A year before the Scots arrived, Nicola’s relationship with the Spanish soured. Pennycook’s caustic introduction to the story summed up his opinion of the event: “A trifle made him break with them.” When Nicola’s prized French gun had broken, he had a visiting Spaniard take it to Portobello to be fixed. But the gun was not to leave Portobello. The Governor was shown the “Fuzie” and concluded that “it was too good for a Heathen who kept correspondence with the French.” With what the Scots would have regarded as typical Spanish conceit, the Governor sent a “rusty match Lock” to replace the French fuzie. “This he took so heinously,” according to Pennycook, “that he fell upon the Spaniards wherever he found them, and cutt them off; nor is he to be reconcil’d to them.”¹²⁴ Ambrosio and Nicola were a neat contrast. Ambrosio embodied many of the same characteristics deplored in the tyrant leader whereas his contemplated replacement, Nicola, seemed to have been endowed with all the virtues of a European. And yet, even years of civilized living could not erase Nicola’s irrational temperament. It seems that subtle problems began to emerge in the construction of the Tule as selves rationally

¹²³ Insh, “Captain Pennycook’s Journal,” *Darien Shipping Papers*, 87.

¹²⁴ Insh, “Captain Pennycook’s Journal,” *Darien Shipping Papers*, 87.

seeking to subject themselves to the Scots so that they could learn the ways of civil living. The example of Nicola suggested that refinement through education could qualify the Tule use of violence, but education might never cure a Tule person of their perceived irrationality.

The Scots were not pacifists. They were willing to use violence when pressed—indeed many of the men in the colony were veterans of continental wars. But they believed that violence on the frontier could still be measured. There was civilized violence and uncivilized violence; legitimate and illegitimate. The Scottish definition of civilized violence can be traced back to their understanding of empire. They clearly saw themselves as traders rather than agents of conquest. During Pennycook's first encounter with Andreas the Tule inquired after the Scots' purpose in coming to the Darien. Pennycook answered: "our Designe was to settle among them...[and] that our Businesse was chiefly Trade." When Andreas followed by asking if they were at war with the Spaniards, he was told "if the Spaniards did offer us noe affront or Injury, we had nothing to say to them; but if otherwise we would make open Warr."¹²⁵ To the Caledonians, violence was only legitimate if it was provoked by an unsolicited act of aggression.¹²⁶ For a colony barely holding on and in the early years of establishment, it made sense not to incite conflicts up and down the coast of the Isthmus. Yet William Paterson feared that the delicate nuances of European imperial politics were lost on the Tule. Throughout February 1699, the Tule approached the Scots with warnings of imminent Spanish attacks

¹²⁵ Insh, "Captain Pennycook's Journal," *Darien Shipping Papers*, 81. Another example occurred when Captain Pincartone was asked by the Spanish court why the Scots "went about to build such a strong fort to suppress the Indians and subjects of Spain?" He answered, "We never intended to suppress the Indians or the King of Spain's subjects, or any other nation that came [not] as enemies against us." Burton, "Answers and Questions by Judges in Seville to Captain Pincartone," *The Darien Papers*, 106.

¹²⁶ For a further exploration of this issue see fn. 4 of this Chapter.

or with opportunities to catch the Spanish unawares. The Scots, said Paterson, refused all of these opportunities, contending that Scotland's king was at peace with the Spanish. Only a direct assault by the Spaniards, they told the Tule, would be grounds for a full-scale Scottish counter-attack. "They exprest a wonderfull hatred and horror for the Spaniards," Paterson observed, "and seemed not to understand how we could be at peace with them, except we were as bad as they."¹²⁷

A counter-image steadily coalesced around the Tule. They had begun as eminently rational and reasonable Aborigines, eager to shed their old culture and learn Scottish ways. But as the Scots had more frequent encounters with the Tule, it became the prevailing view that in times of stress the Tule were controlled more by base emotion than high reason. Of course, the Scots made this judgment often by using their own actions as the standard measure of reason. This was especially true in the realm of conflict. There are not very many accounts of the cooperation between Scots and the Tule during skirmishes with the Spanish. But those that do exist described the Scots as disciplined and hardened soldiers leading the brave but unpredictable Tule into battle.

On 5 February, 1699, a party of Caledonians lead by a Mr. Montgomerie rushed to intercept Spanish troops reputed to be in the vicinity of Captain Pedro's village. Pedro informed the Scots that there were twenty-six Spanish troops, along with Aboriginal and African forces, encamped a few kilometres away. According to Montgomery, Captain Pedro and Captain Diego were "both in great fear and concern that the Spaniards were so near, and desired we might not lose so favourable an occasion, seing [sic] they were lying

¹²⁷ Burton, "Report of Matters Relateing to the Collony of Caledonia, made to the Right Honble. The Court of Directors of the Indian and African Company of Scotland," *The Darien Papers*, 184. This comment precedes a curt description of the battle fought by Montgomery. The force that Montgomery stopped was believed to be a scouting party for a larger force of 1500 men who were forced to abort their attack because of Tule attacks and supply problems. See also, Storrs, "Disaster at Darien (1698-1700)?"

secure without guard or sentinel.”¹²⁸ Montgomery set out immediately with his Tule allies to meet the small Spanish force. The Spanish party was startled into a sudden retreat, and the Scots allies, having spotted a group of Aborigines aiding the Spanish, hastily attacked. “[T]he Indians runing in confusion towards the place alarmed the party, so that I had difficulty to make them keep order in marching to the place, where they [the Tule] lay down among the bushes, not out of fear, butt they being too forward expos’d themselves to the Enemy’s fire.”¹²⁹ Montgomery’s description of this small skirmish against the Spanish emphasized the heedless bravado of the Tule. Tule enmity for the Spaniards provoked a thoughtless emotional outburst that stood out against the studied discipline of Scottish forces. Montgomery’s narrative was a subtle criticism of Aboriginal irrationality vis-à-vis their inability to follow standard European battle practices. This criticism, repeated in Lieutenant Turnbull’s description of the battle of Toubacanti, steadily developed into a celebration of Scots rationality and dutiful bravery.

Near the end of the second expedition the Scots colony was pressured by the Spanish in a joint land and sea attack. On 13 February, 1700, the Tule apprised the Scots of a large Spanish force—approximately 1,600 troops made up of Spaniards, Aborigines and African slaves—moving to assault the Scots. The counsellors decided to surprise the Spanish force with a night attack undertaken by combined Tule and Scottish forces. Captain Campbell of Fonab, a veteran of Flanders, took charge of the expedition. He commanded 200 soldiers from Caledonia and ordered that Lieutenant Turnbull lead the sixty Tule levies into battle. After two days of hard marching the Scots closed in on the

¹²⁸ Burton, “Letter-Mr. Montgomery to the Council: 6th February, 1699,” *The Darien Papers*, 85.

¹²⁹ Burton, “Letter-Mr. Montgomery to the Council: 6th February, 1699,” *The Darien Papers*, 85.

Spaniards, who had built fortifications atop a hill known by the Tule as Toubacanti.¹³⁰

The Scots and the Tule eventually triumphed over the Spanish. They drove the Spanish from their fortifications in a desperate night attack, killing nine enemy soldiers and suffering more than twenty casualties on their own side.

Leading up to the battle, the strain of warfare had taken its toll on the Scot-Tule alliance. Turnbull found himself commanding a strong-willed group of warriors who repeatedly blocked his attempts to assert authority over them. At about midday on the second day of marching, Tule scouts spied the Spanish cutting down trees for defences. Hearing this disconcerting news, Turnbull's warriors pushed the Scots to stop marching and start building their own defences. That way the Spanish would be forced to face a fortified Scots-Tule force if they tried to move against Caledonia. In principle, the Tule reasoning was sound and sensible. Rushing the Spanish ambushade meant an uphill assault against an entrenched enemy. "Capt. Campbell was very willing to march," said Turnbull, "but ye Ingens would not upon any account telling us yt [that] if we marched up the hill we wold all be killed from Ambuskads."¹³¹ The Tule even refused the Scottish request that more scouts be sent forward to assess the progress of the Spanish. Turnbull, exasperated, resorted to bribery and finally insults to propel the Tule to action.

I used all ye perswadians I could promising ym [them] great rewards and telling ym I would go wt [with] them my selfe, they told me I wold be killed, I told them it was no matter though I was killed so yt [that] the Comander could have perfit Intelgence. [Y]n [then] the[y] lawght at me...I turned to ye leader and told ym in yr [their] language yt [that] so they wer great brags of yr [their] Stoutnes in Callidonia [and] yt now I sawe they were all cowards. [T]hen they wer so made at that calling [that] all yr Ingens together running up the hill as if they wold Ingade ye Spainards ymselves by I got ym pasified and they immedeatly ordered two...Ingns to go wt me.¹³²

¹³⁰ Borland, *Memoirs of Darien*, 60.

¹³¹ Spencer, "Some Darien Letters," 407.

¹³² Spencer, 408.

This complex passage is interwoven with the themes of masculinity, discipline and disorder. To justify what might become a senseless sacrifice of his life, Turnbull invoked the idea of altruistic death, claiming “it was no matter though I was killed.” His sacrifice was not in pursuit of selfish goals or emotional impulses but “perfit intelligence”; Turnbull rationalized his possible death as fulfillment of the duty he owed to his country and his Captain. The Tule’s comic rejection of altruistic death—“they lawght at me”—was itself proof that they lacked the refined sensibilities of the civilized. Turnbull, having been forcefully rejected on the grounds of civility, turned away from the idea of duty and resorted to a more primal attack on their masculinity—always “great brags of yr Stoutnes... I sawe they were all cowards.” When the Tule, understood by the Scots to be subordinates, responded to barbed insinuations about their masculinity, they were also confirming their status as uncivilized peoples. Once Turnbull ignited their fervor it knew no rational bounds; sixty Tule rushed forward and attempted to “Ingade ye Spainards ymselves.” Once again, Tule emotionalism and vanity had triumphed over the rationality so prized by Europeans.

In just two short years some Scots saw their vision of the Tule radically transformed. The agenda of trade, the need to establish a foothold in Darien, and the genuine desire to create a new type of empire had led Scots at the outset to envision the Tule as subjects driven by “natural reason” and a shared desire for trade. They hoped the Tule would aid them in establishing a colony overseas, and in return the Scots would satisfy their yearning to be taken into the fold of European culture and civility. The highly idealized encounter between the Tule and the Scots that began this chapter

reflected this urge to see the Tule as energetic subjects of a new Scottish Empire. But by the time the last of the Scots had been forced to abandon the shores of the Darien on 12 April, 1700, their idealized image of the Tule had been severely undermined.

The delicate construction of a Tule people willing to subordinate themselves once they found a civilized teacher simply did not fit the reality of life in the Darien. As the Tule went on managing their affairs in the region according to their own cultural priorities, the Scots vision of co-operative empire faced mounting pressure. In Caledonia, the failure of the Tule to bind themselves to the Scots with unquestioning fervor did not cause the Scots to question the validity of their own cultural assumptions. Instead, they tried to find the cause in the Tule, which led to cultural distancing. It seems that the counselor James Byres even turned to the analogy of a monkey to summarize the Scot-Tule relationship. Upon returning to Scotland, Thomas Drummond lodged the following complaint against Byres: “What reason had you to vilipend the Indians and to make them appear little, saying that they were no better than a parcel of mounkies, and that their friendship was not worth, altho’ I had begged several times they should carry fair with the Indians, knowing very well we could not secure our settlement without their friendship?”¹³³ But Byres and his fellow counselors, convinced that the Tule were not civilized and therefore not martial, did not fear a Tule attack. In a letter home they commented: “they are people of low stature, and weak like; and a Scots grenadier would find it no hard work to defeat ten of them.”¹³⁴

¹³³ Burton, “Papers Regarding the Dispute Between Captain Drummond and Mr. Byres,” *The Darien Papers*, 220.

¹³⁴ Burton, “Letter from the Council to the Directors: Rising Sun, 23 December, 1699,” *The Darien Papers*, 215. Walter Herries, writing about the first expedition, also dismissed the Tule as a military threat. “At our first Landing,” wrote Herries, “Captain *Andreas* came down and lookt upon us, and seem’d to be well enough satisfy’d with his new Tenants (he thinking it in vain to appear otherwise, for if he had muster’d his

During the brief episode of the Scots colonial enterprise in the Darien, there were no recorded outbreaks of violence between the Tule and the Scots. Some scholars, such as Bridget McPhail and George Insh, have chosen to see the peace between the Scots and the Tule as evidence of an innate Scottish sensitivity to cultural and racial difference. But Scottish encounters with the Tule bore many of the same burdens as English interactions with Aborigines in the Americas. Both attempted to instill Christianity and civility in the Indigenous populations they found. The English effort was unsuccessful, in part, because of a lack of focus caused by internal religious and social disputes. The inability to carry out this mission had tragic import for the world encountered by English colonists. “This [failure],” concluded John Elliot, “in turn brought failure, and as failures multiplied, exclusion, rather than inclusion became the order of the day.”¹³⁵ The Scots, similarly, found their efforts to spread civility and create stable partners in empire continually challenged by the agency of the Tule. It was only a matter of time before intercultural strife broke out between the Scots and the Tule. Peace in the Darien was the product of a unique set of geo-political circumstances, not the result of some mythic Scottish respect for common humanity.

whole Clan to oppose use, 6 of our men with fire-arms were enough to conquer him).” Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien*, 54.

¹³⁵ Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, 87.

Chapter 3: Feeding the Commonwealth

We march'd as the *Scots* Armies did in former days with their 40 days Provisions on their backs against their Enemies...But we were sent to the back of Gods elbow, where wee could see nothing but Death, starving and the Spanish Mines before our Eyes.

Walter Herries, 1699

"I know nott in all the world what to doe," wrote a distraught Colin Campbell to the Directors of the Company on 18 August, 1699. We might sympathize with the plight of this young land officer. Campbell had been unceremoniously promoted to the captaincy of the *St. Andrew* during the treacherous seven-week voyage from New Caledonia to Jamaica. Suffering the twin ravages of disease and starvation the *St. Andrew* had lost upwards of 140 men (almost half her crew) during the passage, including the captain and most of the sea officers. Now, finally in Port Royal, Campbell found himself the captain of a stranded, dying and ostracized ship. Sir William Beeston, Governor of Jamaica, refused to give any succor to the Scots, "altho' they should starve [otherwise]."¹ Campbell feared that the loyalty of his men was being severely tried by the whole affair. "I am certain ye seamen will mutiny, and play ye devil," confided Campbell, "for they had nott a weeke's bread; and besides they expect to have their wages here, and will infallibly apply to the Governour for condemning of ye ship."² He concluded his report

¹ Burton, "Captain Colin Campbell to the Court of Directors: Port Royal, August 18th, 1699," 150. Sir William Beeston was no friend of the Scots endeavor for he feared that Jamaican settlers would find New Caledonia far more attractive than Jamaica. "If they fix there and are healthy," he wrote, "the noise of Gold...will carry away all our Servants, Debtors, and ordinary peoples in hopes of mending their fortunes and thereby will very much weaken the small strength we have." Sir William Beeston quoted in George P. Insh, *Papers Relating to the Ships and Voyages of the Company of Scotland and Trading to Africa and the Indies, 1696-1707* (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, 1924), 106. For legality, he could refer to the Royal Proclamation passed by Jamaica against the Scots in April 1699. This proclamation denied the Scots military aid and barred Jamaicans from trading with them. King William quietly encouraged most of his colonies to pass similar edicts. *The Original Papers and Letters Relating to the Scots Company*, EEBO (1700), 42-49.

² John Burton, "Captain Colin Campbell to the Court of Directors: Port Royal, August 18th, 1699," *The Darien Papers: Being a Selection of Original Letters and Official Documents Relating to the Establishment of a Colony at Darien by the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies, 1695-1700* (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, 1849), 150-151.

with righteous anger: “They are the damnedest crew that I ever saw, for such of them that are not lazy are confoundedly mutinous.”³ But how subversive were Campbell’s sailors?

Campbell’s fears that his crew would play the devil and overthrow the rightful structures of command and authority linked the mutiny and mutineers with anarchy or, perhaps worse, the “alternative social order” of piracy.⁴ Yet, Early Modern Scots of all sorts strongly believed in the necessity of hierarchy as a bulwark against disorder. Those who threatened riot or mutiny were usually not intent on instigating revolts that might create radically different social worlds. Instead, the lower orders offered vague warnings of violence in an attempt to coerce authorities to discharge their obligations to provide for and protect their subjects.⁵ Likewise, Campbell’s “mutiny” did not undermine authority so much as it reminded the captain of his paternalistic duty to his sailors. Far from running away with the *St. Andrew*, according to Campbell the crew was threatening to contact the Governor and have the ship impounded if Campbell could not feed or pay them. This was still a frightening prospect for Campbell, but it was no diabolic scheme to overturn law and authority. Indeed, if sailors on board the ship were grumbling about low rations and unpaid wages, they were confirming Campbell’s status as their captain. Campbell was their leader and these were his responsibilities.

Campbell’s portrayal of his crew as devilish, sullen and contemptuous of authority deliberately obfuscated the issue. It downplayed his failure to provide for the crew by tapping into elite angst that the lower sorts, freed of the bridle of authority,

³ John Prebble, *The Darien Disaster* (London: Penguin, 1970), 222.

⁴ For the connection between piracy and mutiny see Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, “Chapter 5: Hydrachy: Sailors, Pirates, and the Maritime State,” in *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 173.

⁵ John Walter, “Public Transcripts, Popular Agency and the Politics of Subsistence in Early Modern England,” in *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy, and Subordination in Britain and Ireland*, ed. Michael J. Braddick and John Walter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 145.

would drag society into disorder and violence.⁶ As Early Modern historian Andy Wood warns, elite “accounts of seditious speech were implicated within the conflicts they describe, as the authorities sought simultaneously to investigate, codify and crush popular politics.”⁷ With this caution in mind, this chapter surveys the critical intersection between food and the legitimacy of New Caledonia’s government during the very first months of settlement. I will focus upon the circumstances that led to and followed outbreaks of disobedience—primarily desertion and mutiny—in the hopes of discovering whether these were acts undertaken by “rascall[s]” and “villains” or the acts of desperate men, aggrieved by incompetent government and disappointed expectations.⁸

Hunger was a key factor driving the discontent that led Campbell’s sailors and New Caledonia’s colonists to threaten or engage in revolt. Yet incidents of revolt, desertion, and mutiny that invoked food as justification were not simply “rebellions of the belly”—uprisings explicable by instinct; rather they often articulated dissatisfaction with the ruling order.⁹ Because food was an everyday necessity, the mismanagement of the provisions that sailors and settlers depended upon drew ire quickly. Of course, it was also true that the proper management and predictable distribution of provisions could inspire confidence. The dependency of settlers, slaves, and sailors on food meant that it was often used by colonial leaders and captains to consolidate authority. Increased food

⁶ Andy Wood has argued that the gentry of Early Modern England held a “polarized vision of society...laden with grandiose anxiety.” They believed themselves to be the purveyors of honor, civility, and rationality in society because they “knew” these qualities to be absent among the lower orders. Informed by this belief, the gentry often saw incidents of popular tumult as evidence that the lower sorts needed the stabilizing hand of elite authority. Andy Wood, “‘Poore men wool speke one daye’: Plebian Languages of Deference and Defiance in England, c. 1520-1640,” in *The Politics of the Excluded, c.1500-1850*, ed. Tim Harris (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 75.

⁷ Wood, 72.

⁸ Burton, “Letter from the Council to the Directors: Rising Sun, 23 December, 1699,” 212-213, 215.

⁹ T.S. Ashton quoted in E.P. Thompson, “Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” *Past and Present*, 50 (1971): 77.

allowance could be used to reward and rationing to punish.¹⁰ But settlers and sailors also had expectations about the quality and quantity of food they would receive for doing their duty well. Refusal to honour these expectations or the forcing of hard labour on little food provoked resentment. As Greg Dening writes, “sailors’ stomachs were also spaces of power” and woe to the captain who forgot that point.¹¹ Michael LaCombe, the author of a recent study of food and authority in Jamestown, notes that the stability of Early Modern colonial government hinged on food: “one half of orderly government was obedience to authority; the other was ample provisions from those in authority.”¹²

Throughout the Early Modern period the coercive power of the state—either in the form of an organized militia or the ability to standardize government policy throughout the nation—remained relatively weak. With few means to systematically compel obedience, much of the government’s civic authority hinged upon “persuasion and propaganda.”¹³ Many kings appealed to the idea of the commonwealth to legitimize their rule. In so doing, they publicly acknowledged that their authority descended from God and pledged to promote the common good of all members of society.¹⁴ The rhetoric of government for the common good permeated society and, even in highly unequal Early Modern world, it gave the lower sorts a measure of influence in government. To cultivate

¹⁰ The plantations of Jamaica and Jamestown’s stores offer two different instances where rewards and punishments were communicated through the distribution of food. See Beth Fowkes Tobin, ““And there raise yams”: Slaves’ Gardens in the Writings of West Indian Plantocrats,” *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 23 (1999): 166, 119. Michael LaCombe, “Food and Authority in the English Atlantic World, 1570-1640” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2006), 42-43. This practice could breed dissension if used capriciously. To this end, the Company of Scotland forbade the Captain of the *Speedwell* (1700) to show preference by casually inviting the ships men to his mess. Their intent was “that no person on board may reckon himself unkindly used by not being allowed to have his diet constantly at the Captain’s table.” Insh, *Darien Shipping Papers*, 237.

¹¹ Greg Dening, *Mr. Bligh’s Bad Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 74-75.

¹² LaCombe, “Food and Authority,” 41. This theoretical discussion is indebted to LaCombe’s comprehensive work on food and authority throughout England’s seventeenth-century colonies.

¹³ A.J. Fletcher and J. Stevenson, “Introduction,” in *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, ed. Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 38.

¹⁴ John Walter, “Public Transcripts, Popular Agency and the Politics of Subsistence,” 125.

legitimacy—a vital element of consensual government—office holders, kings and magistrates had to be sensitive to the constraints imposed on them by the rhetoric of the commonwealth.¹⁵

In Scotland, the commonwealth was commonly portrayed as a contract, or covenant, between God and his Presbyterian subjects. Edward J. Cowan argues that Scots believed in a “double covenant,” where the contract formed with God committed the people to religious and also civic reform.¹⁶ This double covenant proved to be fertile ground for a contractual concept of kingship. As early as 1579, Philippe Duplessis Mornay contended that the Kings of the Old Testament swore a double covenant at their coronation: “the first between God, the king, and the people, that the people might be the people of God; the second between the king and the people, that the people shall obey faithfully, and the king command justly.” If the king failed to fulfill his obligations to the people, Mornay was confident that “the people’s representative’s not only had the right, but the duty to resist him.”¹⁷ Perhaps the most radical invocation of the covenant was in the 1630s, when Scottish Presbyterians oppressed by the rule of Charles I invoked the language of the covenant to justify revolution.¹⁸

Thus, the commonwealth that was held together by a covenant between God and his people could often be radically egalitarian, at least in its rhetoric. “Laws are made for

¹⁵ Michael Braddick and John Walter point out that ideas like the commonwealth were more than idealized public statements about power relationships; they were also “legitimizing idea[s]” that modified government rhetoric. Even when government officials acted with unseemly intentions, they were often forced to render their behavior acceptable by appealing to “some accepted set of social and political principles” such as the commonwealth. Michael J. Braddick and John Walter, “Introduction: Grids of Power: Order, Hierarchy, and Subordination in Early Modern Society,” in *Negotiating power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy, and Subordination in Britain and Ireland*, ed. Michael J. Braddick and John Walter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 10.

¹⁶ Edward J. Cowan, “The Making of the National Covenant,” in *The Scottish National Covenant in its British Context*, ed. John Morrill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 1990), 70.

¹⁷ Cowan, 71, 72.

¹⁸ Allan I. MacInnes, *Charles I and the Making of the Covenanting Movement, 1625-1641* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1991), 157-158, 173-177.

Hedging in the GREAT ONES, no less than the SMAL [sic],” wrote religious leaders in Scotland, “and...the GREAT GOD, whose Moral Law they Transgress is no Respector of Persons.”¹⁹ Yet, this rosy language masked the highly unequal power relations that prevailed in Early Modern systems of law and order. Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson argue that the gentry “subjected themselves” to the law precisely “because they were supremely well placed to use it to protect their own interests.”²⁰ In most cases, the ideal of the commonwealth did not so much prevent abuses of power as attenuate them by giving the lower sorts grounds for grievance. The limited, but not insignificant, ability of the lower sorts to influence government officials was outlined in the General Assembly’s instructions to the colony. Magistrates of the new colony were told to consign fines to public coffers instead of their personal purses. The latter practice was deemed “a practice most hurtful in your Native Land; whereby the Covetous are Tempted to Squeeze and Oppress, and those of a more honest and free Disposition, to become Slack; lest they should appear gripping in their own interest.”²¹ Scottish elites were apprehensive that the useful fiction of the commonwealth might be weakened far from the influence of the state and church. Thus, they looked to discourage any colonial policies that might further erode authority by breeding resentment among the settlers.

The commonwealth was especially fragile during the early days of a colonial venture when officials were forced to contend with poor rations, illness and death. In this context, harsh rule was excused by the dangers of colonization and the threat to success

¹⁹ *The Sighs and Groans of a Sinking Kingdom in an Humble Address to the Parliament of Scotland*, EEBO (London: 1700), 7.

²⁰ A.J. Fletcher and J. Stevenson, “Introduction,” 26.

²¹ General Assembly, *Letter from the Commission of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to the Honourable Council and Inhabitants of the Scots Colony of Caledonia in America*, EEBO (Glasgow: 1699), 9.

internal dissent entailed.²² In New Caledonia, for example, the penalty for resisting a superior or inciting mutiny, revolt or rebellion was death.²³ For settlers reliant on a government which often zealously guarded authority with violence, discontent was best expressed tacitly. Murmuring, grumbling, and rumours were all methods of resistance that allowed settlers in New Caledonia to express displeasure without rupturing the social order through violence. These methods form what James C. Scott dubs the “infrapolitics” of subalterns groups; “a variety of low-profile forms of resistance that dare not speak in their own name.”²⁴ Scott explores a variety of methods used by the disadvantaged to voice their dissent or defend their dignity without provoking authority. Grumbling and muttering preserved the façade of deference between figures of authority and subordinates precisely because the message itself was indistinct. Instead, the tone of the message—usually connoting discontent or displeasure—alerted superiors that something was awry with their rule.²⁵ In the Early Modern setting, these rumblings often called for the restoration of the proper order of society and if not properly managed they could lead to revolt. In the correspondence of the Council of New Caledonia, references to muttering and grumbling among the settlers often preceded desertion or mutiny. Colonial officials

²² Jamestown was an early example of the use of martial rule to save a floundering colony. Karen Kupperman, “The Beehive as a Model for Colonial Design,” in *America in European Consciousness, 1493-1750*, ed. Karen Kupperman (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 278-281.

²³ New Caledonia’s Constitution set out death as a punishment for various forms of revolt. Clause 5: For any who “intice or persuade...others to any rebellious act.” Clause 6: For any who “contrive, endeavor, or cause any mutine or sedition.” And, Clause 7: For any who dare to “disobey his Superior Officer, or resist him in the execution of his Office.” Burton, “Rules and Ordinances for the Government of this Colony,” 114. Martial law was usually seen as a transitory stage, not a permanent arrangement. Ian Steele’s survey of the colonial implementation of martial law during the Glorious Revolution argued that most Governor’s saw themselves as civil authorities, despite their military background. Jamaica was the only colony to implement martial law to control the population. See Ian K. Steele, “Governors or Generals?: A Note on Martial Law and the Revolution of 1689 in English America,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 46 (April, 1989): 313-314.

²⁴ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 19.

²⁵ Scott, 154-156.

often downplayed their culpability by portraying these outbreaks as isolated incidents of “villainous and treacherous design.”²⁶

On December 28, 1698, New Caledonia was declared to be a colony ruled by “the Holy Scripture, right Reason, and the Examples of the wisest and justest nations.”

Prospective settlers were promised freedom of government, trade and a “full and free liberty of Conscience in matter of Religion.”²⁷ Those boastful claims may have rung hollow within the walls of the colony where two spates of desertion had already signalled the settlers’ dissatisfaction with the government. This disillusionment was fostered in part by the unexpectedly martial nature of the colonial government. Caledonia was ruled by a council of seven appointed by the Company of Scotland and given full powers over civil, military and naval affairs in the new colony.²⁸ These counsellors ruled over a hierarchical society which resembled a military organization but was clothed in the rhetoric of a private company. There were several tiers to New Caledonian society. First, the Company of Scotland had divided the posts of “Overseer,” “Sub-Overseers,” and “Assistants” between sixty veteran soldiers. Most of them had fought as officers in the wars in Flanders; twelve had been captains in King William’s army.²⁹ The rest of the expedition—those of the 1100 left who were not sailors—were predominately organized

²⁶ Burton, “The Council of the Colony to the Directors: Forte St. Andrew, 21 April, 1699,” 142.

²⁷ Francis Hart, *The Disaster of Darien* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1929), 227.

²⁸ Burton, “Appointment of the Council of the Colony,” 49. Most of the information in the following section derives from Herries account. Only one letter from the Directors mentions this breakdown of settlers, but it references another document, no longer extant, for further information. See Burton, “Dispatches and Letters from the Directors to the Council at the Colony: 17 August, 1699 Greenrock,” 135.

²⁹ James Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien Including an Answer to the Defence of the Scots Settlement There*, EEBO (1700), 31.

as “Planters,” but some fell under the category of “Tradesmen” or “Gentleman Volunteers.”³⁰

By law the company had the power to appoint soldiers and run the colony using martial law. But to use this privilege the directors of the company had to obtain approval from the Privy Council of King William’s hostile government. To avoid this measure, Herries claims, “they took their own way of Christ’ning them [the settlers], designing at the same time to make them answer the same ends.”³¹ The deception was very thin indeed. There were few overt references to this ranking system; instead most overseers, sub-overseers, and assistants were referred to as captains, lieutenants, and ensigns. Plans to organize society along parliamentary lines by dividing land into districts and enabling each district to elect a “Freeman Inhabitant” seem to have met with mixed success. The New Caledonian Parliament met only twice during the first settlement, and not at all during the second.³² It seems instead that a society of martial order trumped this parliament. The colony’s Jewish translator Benjamin Spencer, captured by the Spanish in Havana, described Caledonian society in military terms. He told his Spanish interrogators that every ship carried “four companies of forty-five men...with a captain and two lieutenants, two alfarez, and one sergeant with a total of fifty-two men per squadron and

³⁰ This last rank was defined by the Company’s secretary, Roderick MacKenzie, in the following manner: “[S]uch Young Gentlemen as went in no particular siation [sic], but only in hopes of preferment as opportunity should offer.” Roderick MacKenzie, *Exact List of all the Men, Women, and Boys that Died on Board the Indian and African Company’s Fleet*, EEBO (Edinburgh: 1699).

³¹ Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien*, 31.

³² Burton, “Appointment of the Council of the Colony,” 50. See also Burton, “Report by William Paterson to the Directors,” 186-187. There is no information available detailing who was in the Parliament. But the fact that no documents mention elections, taken together with the martial form of society suggests that “Freemen” may have been simply high ranking officers. All of this, however, is strictly speculative. However, a prevalent way to increase prestige—itsself a less often considered form of authority—in Early Modern England was the acquisition of these local offices. Thus, participation in parliament may have solidified the authority of existing power structures. See Michael J. Braddick, “Administrative Performance: the Representation of Political Authority in Early Modern England,” in *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society*.

thirty sailors.”³³ Spencer’s evidence, coupled with the few court documents we have offering evidence of planter life, suggests that in New Caledonia every captain ruled over his own company.³⁴

The Presbyterian Church also held great sway, at least theoretically, in this new colony.³⁵ The first article of the “Rules and Ordinances for the Good Government of the Colony” pledged that “the precepts, instructions, examples, commands, and prohibitions...in the Holy Scriptures...shall...have the full force and effect of laws within this Colony.”³⁶ The Church of Scotland anticipated that the riches of the Darien, although economically desirable, would be socially destructive to a commonwealth in its “Infancy.” The General Assembly declared that “Moral and Christian Virtues,” such as sobriety and diligence, were the only effective inoculations against the secular and spiritual turmoil threatened by sudden wealth. “Hath not the Dissolution of Manners,” warned the Assembly, “weak’ned, enervated and broken some of your Neighbours, and rendred them easie Prey to their Enemies and the Objects of Divine Vengeance[?]”³⁷ With this concern in mind, colonial officials were encouraged to use “[e]xemplary

³³ Ignacio Gallup-Diaz, “The Spanish Management of Imperial Chaos, 1698-1701,” in *The Door of the Seas and Key to the Universe: Indian Politics and Imperial Rivalry in the Darien, 1640-1750* (Gutenberg<e>, Columbia University Press. 2001), 13.

³⁴ See the depositions cited by Burton, 206-207.

³⁵ It was a common complaint among ministers that the colony was anything but religious and that the failure to rule with God in mind was the cause of the Caledonia’s problems. John Borland and John Maxwell claimed the failure of the first colony was unsurprising: “[F]or what better can any thinking man (that heares what wee now understand) conclude, in any reason, to have been expected from the management of such who hate God themselves, his image, and all virtue in others.” Burton, “Letter—John Borland, John Maxwell, to Hugh Fraser: Boston, 23 September, 1699,” 158. For a similar judgment of the second expedition see Francis Borland, *Memoirs of Darien Giving a Short Description of that Countrey*, ECCO (Glasgow, 1715), 33.

³⁶ Burton, “Rules and Ordinances for the Good Government of this Colony: 24 April, 1699,” 113. The complicity of ecclesiastical and civil authority had been a hallmark of Presbyterian doctrine in Scotland since its inception. In the *Second Book of Discipline* (1578), the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland stated that “Spirituell rulers should require the Christian magistrate to minister justice, and punish vice, and to maintain the liberty and quietness of the Kirk within their bounds.” Religious authority sanctioned state justice that was used to create “godly and good subjects.” Church of Scotland, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the Kirke of Scotland*. EEBO (1641), 78-79.

³⁷ General Assembly, *Letter from the Commission of the General Assembly*, 7.

punishment” to eradicate self-serving vices believed to threaten the “Prosperity of the Commonwealth.”³⁸ The Church also appealed to the planters by extolling the benefits of this sometimes merciless colonial justice. “We are...confident,” the ministers wrote in their advice to the common settler, “that you will Obey, not only for Fear, but, for Conscience Sake, and your own Interests.”³⁹ Settlers who would patiently “bear the Toils and Fatigues of... first Settlement, not Murmuring” were to be rewarded with “Rest in the Land.” The requirement that the settlers not “murmur” was a clear indication that the Church desired not only acceptance of the new colonial hierarchy, but “contentment” with the ordeals that they might ask the settlers to undertake.⁴⁰ Scottish authorities were confident that an authoritarian society devoid of sin and dissent would be best equipped to bear the rigors of colonization.

The poetry of Scottish popular culture spoke to a far different ideal of life abroad. During the famines of the late 1690s, the appeal of colonization grew immeasurably among the Scottish people. The lure of riches and the prospect of adventure certainly accounted for some of this excitement. Alexander Pennecuik wrote that the settlers were “Inspyr’d with thirst of Fame, and fond to have, / Titles upon the Marbles of their Grave.”⁴¹ But the call of settlement probably had special appeal for poor Scots hard hit by the scarcity of food and employment throughout Scotland.⁴² Historians estimate that

³⁸ General Assembly, 13, 8.

³⁹ General Assembly, 14-15.

⁴⁰ General Assembly, 14-15.

⁴¹ Alexander Pennecuik, *Caledonia Triumphans: a Panegyrick to the King*, EEBO (Edinburgh, 1699).

⁴² An estimated £100,000 went to poor relief in 1696, and this may have grown to as much as £400,000 as the famine intensified. During this time, Scotland searched desperately for alternative sources of income. But for the most part it found the country too poor to be taxed and available moneys already committed to either the Company of Scotland or the Bank of Scotland. See Christopher Whatley, “Taking Stock: Scotland at the End of the Seventeenth Century,” In *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 127 (2005), 112-113. Indeed, the degree to which the Company’s activities were informed by the poverty rampant in Scotland cannot be emphasized enough. An essay encouraging domestic trade cited the Company’s decision to obtain most of

between emigration and famine-induced deaths, Scotland may have lost upwards of 200,000 souls—one-fifth to one-sixth of her population—during the late 1690s.⁴³ For many, the words of the mysterious poet R.A.—a man “poor of purse and Person too”—captured the horror of life at home and the appeal the Americas. He wrote: “And those who do this Traffick Propogat, / May have their Names, in Ages Memorat, /... Though some may chance by casual Death to fall / Yet let not that discourage great nor small; / For since they Sail’d, double the Number have / Even here at Home, doubtless gone to the Grave.”⁴⁴

In 1697, an anonymous Scottish poet dreamt of a new colony and the freedom it would bring to the Scottish poor. The poet envisaged an idyllic land of “[e]ternal spring without decay” where exquisite new flowers bloomed every morning to greet the rising sun.⁴⁵ It was a land never “with raging War opprest” and undefiled by the blood of men or beasts; a land “happy in being Wild.”⁴⁶ Against this background of pristine wilderness, the Scottish poet projected a utopian image of a society free of arduous labour and want—for some.

This Company designs a Colony.
 To which all Mankind freely may resort,
 And find quick Justice in an open Port.
 To that the weary Labourer may go,
 And gain an easie Wealth in doing so.
 Small Use of tiresome Labour will be there,

its goods from Scotland as, at least in part, guided by benevolent intent. “Because thereby they might employ and maintain many hundreds of poor Tradesmen and others in a time (I may say) of Dearth, who otherways [sic] would be reduced to great Extremities.” Sincere Well-wisher to the Honour and Interest of his Country, *An Essay Against the Transportation and Selling of Men to the Plantations of Foreigners* (Edinburgh, 1699), 16.

⁴³ R.E. Tyson quoted in Whatley, 109.

⁴⁴ *An Congratulatory Poem on the Safe Arrival of the Scots AFRICAN and INDIAN Fleet in CALEDONIA*, EEBO (1699).

⁴⁵ *A poem upon the undertaking of the Royal Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies*, EEBO (1697), 10.

⁴⁶ *A poem upon the undertaking*, 10.

That Clyme richly rewards a little Care,
 There every Man may choose a pleasant seat,
 Which *poor Men* will make Rich, & *Rich Men* Great,
 Black Slaves like bussie Bees will plant them Canes
 [That] Have Juice more sweet then honey in their Veins,
 Which boil'd to Sugar, brings in constant gains
 They'l raise them *Cotton, Ginger, Indigo.*
Luscious, Potatoes, and rich *Coco.*
 Ships thence increase to fetch these Goods away,
 For which the Stock will ready Money pay.
 By Manufactures here the Poor will live,
 So they that go and they that stay will thrive.⁴⁷

Scots craved a land where little effort could grow an abundant wealth of crops for export.

So why did they need to use slave labour? Note the language of the following couplet:

“There every Man may choose a pleasant seat, / Which *poor Men* will make *Rich*, & *Rich Men* Great.” In maintaining a society split along lines of hierarchy, it seems that the utopian civilization envisioned by the poet did not profoundly remake the paternalistic arrangement of contemporary European society. Yet, in allowing the former laborer the comfort of a pleasant seat—a double entendre that suggested leisure and land ownership—the poet allowed downtrodden Scots to shed the shackles of work and take on the authority required to exercise power over others. Now they could watch as slaves undertook the work that had been their lot. The selective reach of equality certainly belied another poet’s boastful claim that “Since by Nature and Law we are all equally free, / Wherever true Merit is found, let it be / Rewarded most nobly in every Degree.”⁴⁸

Scottish popular culture did not seek to fundamentally remake the hierarchical society found at home. Even the notion of Patersonian government, which, by virtue of Paterson’s immense popularity, might have been a vessel for radicalism, focused on establishing an orderly society free from fear. A colony built on Paterson’s “wholesome

⁴⁷ *A poem upon the undertaking*, 10.

⁴⁸ *Trade's release: or, Courage to the Scotch-Indian-Company*, EEBO (Edinburgh 1699-1700).

Laws” would guarantee the sanctity of personal property and “free their Persons from all Fear / Of Thummikin and Booting.”⁴⁹ Thummikin—more commonly known as the pilliwinks—and booting were both notorious forms of Scottish torture used to compel confessions.⁵⁰ Their banishment offered hope of a new society free from pernicious tools of state power and the violent practices they denoted. To allay fears that sudden wealth and wide freedoms would destabilize the colony, Alexander Pennecuik told King William that the Caledonians were directed by “Orders sent from elder Heads. / Of a wise Senat, who consult and Vote.”⁵¹ Many Scots, oppressed by want at home, eagerly envisioned the comforts of the Americas. In an age when many considered paradise a “realizable geographical reality,” Scots fantasized about a bountiful landscape where little work and generous government would create an oasis of personal and political freedoms unknown in Scotland.⁵²

The pervasive optimism among the settlers that paradise was simply awaiting discovery was played upon by the Directors of the Company of Scotland. The Company’s unstable finances forced the directors to be extremely thrifty—and perhaps downright cheap—with their money. One way they tried to save money was by forcing the colony to pay the wages of their settlers, while the Directors undertook to pay some of the wages of the sailors. Herries wrote that these poor settlers had “no Pay, nor none to trust to.” They were sustained only by “the hopes they were fatn’d with of picking the Gold off the

⁴⁹ The full passage, previously cited in Chapter 2, is as follows: “No Brawle, No Murmure, no Complaint, / No Cause of any Discontent, / Where Patersonian-Government / Shall once commence a Footing, / His wholesome Laws being publish’d there, / Shall harmless keep their Goods and Gear, / And free their Persons from all Fear / Of Thummikin and Booting.” *Trade’s release*.

⁵⁰ Scott Moir, Scott.Moir@cbu.ca, “Scottish Torture,” 18 June, 2007. Personal email to the author.

⁵¹ Pennecuik, *Caledonia Triumphans*.

⁵² Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 50-51.

Leaves of the Trees, which few of them doubted of that went on that foot.”⁵³ The government convinced settlers that the short-term hardships entailed in travelling to the Darien would quickly be offset by the unimaginable rewards they would reap in the first months of settlement. The continued legitimacy of the Council of Caledonia hinged upon the realization of this promise.⁵⁴ But the abysmal supply situation in the fleet quickly ensured that the anticipated wealth of the Darien was not gold, but food.

A general dearth in Scotland, a cash-strapped Company that tried to cut corners by buying low quality food, the mismanagement of those provisions while in port, sheer incompetence and shipwrecks bedevilled the supplies of both expeditions.⁵⁵ Both expeditions were forced to live under a discipline-eroding regimen of rationing during their time on the Isthmus. The settlers of the first expedition could place much of the blame for the supply shortage at the feet of inexperienced directors and a stubborn captain. While the vessels of the first expedition were waiting to sail, the directors, who were by Herries’ account “no Witches at their craft,” ineptly let the crew draw on the supplies until they consumed a third of the ship’s larder. Last-minute attempts to

⁵³ Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien*, 30. Tales of gold and wealth beyond imagining appeared throughout the pamphlet literature. One tale told would be settlers about the Spaniards who lived in the Darien trading goods for gold. Testifying to the Spaniards manifest wealth, the author reported with wonder “THERE BEING GOLD SCALES IN EVERY HOUSE.” *A Short Account from, and Description of the Isthmus of Darien, where the Scots Collony are Settled*, EEBO (1699), 19. Anecdotally, it would seem that perceptions of the Darien, a land easy affluence, differed from those of North America, a land of labor. John Reid, a Scottish gardener for aristocrats, immigrated to New Jersey in 1683. He sent home vivid descriptions of rich, but untapped, agricultural lands that begged for development by “good Tradesmen, and good Husbandmen and Labourers.” Reid believed that “Poor men such as myself may live better here than in Scotland if they will but work.” Roger Emerson, “The Scottish Literati and America, 1680-1800,” in *Nation and Province in the First British Empire: Scotland and the Americas, 1600-1800*, ed. Ned C. Landsman (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2001), 188.

⁵⁴ Counter-intuitively, it would seem that while bounty would confirm the legitimacy and authority of the Council in the short-term, it probably would have made ruling the settlers far more challenging. With a lush food supply and easily collected gold, they may have followed the example of settlers from the Virginia Company stranded on Bermuda in 1609. In the absence of want or anxiety, they began openly challenging the authority of colonial leaders. See LaCombe, , “Food and Authority,” 81-94.

⁵⁵ For an example of the problems of dearth, poverty and shipwrecks see Burton, “Dispatches and Letters from the Directors to the Council of at the Colony,” 121-126.

replenish the ship's stocks were frustrated by the general shortage in Scotland and the Company's poor credit; thus, the provisions were never adequately restored.⁵⁶ William Paterson's representation to Captain Pennycook that the supplies should be inventoried before leaving port was brusquely dismissed. Pennycook told Paterson pointedly: "I must give him leave to think that he knew his business and the instructions he had to follow."⁵⁷

When a fleet-wide audit was undertaken three days later it sparked panic among the counsellors. They discovered that most of their supplies would last only five months at present consumption levels. The only encouraging news was that they had nigh on eleven months of stockfish —unsalted, air dried fish, usually cod—in their holds.⁵⁸ But even if they were to eat fish four days a week, Herries reported that there was only four months of butter and oil to prepare it properly.⁵⁹ The dreadful quality of the food drew criticism as well. The bread especially—"made up of damnified Wheat which was bought cheap"—was an object of contempt and cause for concern throughout the fleet. "This Bread was not fit for dogs to eat," wrote Herries contemptuously, "but it was a mercy we had a good many Highlanders in our Legion, who were not used to feed on much of God's Creatures that's hallowed."⁶⁰ The council ordered the whole fleet to begin strict rationing, and ships were dispatched to inform the Company. Attempts to head off starvation were blocked, however, by an impenetrable blanket of fog that made the

⁵⁶ Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien*, 45.

⁵⁷ Burton, "Report By William Paterson: Edinburgh, 19 December 1699," 179.

⁵⁸ "Stockfish, 1a," *The Oxford English Dictionary: OED Online* (Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁵⁹ Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien*, 47.

⁶⁰ Hodges, 48. Ironically, recent studies performed of Scottish diets indicate that few Scots, Lowland or Highland, tasted those "hallowed" meats with any regularity. Moreover, comparisons between the seventeenth-century Highland and Lowland diet suggest that while the former was far more reliant on meat by-products (cheese or milk), the latter relied heavily on grain foods and oats. A.J.S. Gibson and T.C. Smout, *Prices, Food and Wages in Scotland, 1550-1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), Table 7.1, 227.

nearby Orkney Isles unreachable and scattered the entire fleet.⁶¹ Meanwhile, the news that all the landsmen and sailors would be put on rations provoked much “ill blood.” Herries, perhaps overdramatically, feared that he was in danger of having his “throat cut for being the Author” of the settlers’ privations.⁶²

Scots settlers and sailors alike yearned for the end of their trans-Atlantic voyage to come quickly. Becalmed between Santo Domingo and Cartagena, the fleet began to feel the ill effects of “unwholesome water” they had taken on near the Dutch island of St. Thomas.⁶³ As men began to die, like “rotten Sheep” according to Herries, an anonymous diarist wrote the following: “We see frequently dolphins about the ship, bot catch none as yet. We frequently wash the ship with vinegar, and then smoaks; being at present very sickly.”⁶⁴ After a long, taxing voyage tainted by the spectre of the death and the longing for fresh food, the shores of the Darien looked like that splendid oasis that settlers had been told to expect by Scottish officials.

The land abounded with edibles. The Scots described fish of all descriptions, turkeys, fowls, ducks, deer, rabbits, goats, and more.⁶⁵ Hector MacKenzie wrote incredulously about the delectable primates: “Yet of all the latter [meats] I must needs say, that Monkeys and Baboons are the best and choicest that we have hitherto met with.”⁶⁶ In Borland’s history of the expedition, he raved about the “Sea-Cow, because its

⁶¹ See Insh, Wallace’s Diary, 69. And Burton, “Report By William Paterson: Edinburgh, 19 December 1699,” 179.

⁶² Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien*, 47.

⁶³ Burton, “Hector Mackenzie to Mr. Haldane of Gleneages: Unicorn, 21 December, 1699,” 79.

⁶⁴ Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien*, 51. James Maidment, ed., “Journal of the Scots, African, and Indian Fleet, From the Setting Forth From Kilcaldy, 8th July 1698, to the Arrival at the Bay of Darien, 1st November, 1699,” in *Analecta Scotica: Collections Illustrative of the Civil, Ecclesiastical, and Literary History of Scotland* (Edinburgh: T.G. Stevenson, 1834), 360.

⁶⁵ J.J. Spencer, “Some Darien Letters,” *Scottish Historical Review* 11 (1914): 405. Maidment, 360-361.

⁶⁶ Burton, “Hector MacKenzie to Mr. Haldane of Gleneages: 21 December, 1698,” 80.

head somewhat resembles that Creature, it is of vast bigness and good for food.”⁶⁷

Borland also recounted the ease with which settlers gathered sea turtles. The men would lie waiting when one came ashore to lay eggs. When the turtle finished, they would turn it over on its back and render it defenseless. The turtles, Borland wrote, were reputed “very wholesome [sic] Food...the Seamen say they have three Hearts, some of them are so large as to suffice thirty or fourty men to Dine upon.”⁶⁸ The Isthmus also yielded an almost unending variety and quantity of fruits and vegetables. Mr. Rose’s diary reported that leading settlers feasted on coconuts—“most delicious for the juyce and kernel”—provided by their Tule hosts.⁶⁹ In addition, bananas, melons, oranges, limes and pineapples—“reckoned the most delicate fruit of the Indies”—were easily found.⁷⁰ And the more mundane plantains and yams became staples of the Caledonian diet. Lieutenant Turnbull’s description of the Isthmus captured the wonder that most settlers must have felt. “[E]very Moneth in the year,” Turnbull reported to his patron, “some treese bears wholesome fruits. So that we may say that through the woods thr [their] is allwyse florishes, green fruit & ryp fruit the whole year.”⁷¹

Ironically, Turnbull’s description of an endless bounty of food, while testifying to the quantity and variety of flora and fauna, may have contained a slur on their nutritional value. Karen Kupperman’s research on the Jamaican diet argues that seventeenth-century Englishmen were highly suspicious of the fruits and meats that were produced on the island. While they looked and often tasted delicious, there was a pervasive belief that they were not as nutritious as foods produced in England. During Thomas Gage’s stay in

⁶⁷ Borland, *Memoirs of Darien*, 16.

⁶⁸ Borland, 16.

⁶⁹ Burton, “Mr. Rose’s Journal,” 72.

⁷⁰ Borland, *Memoirs of Darien*, 13-14.

⁷¹ Spencer, “Some Darien Letters,” 405.

Jamaica, he had been puzzled by his greatly increased appetite. Even if he gorged himself on local meat, he found himself hungry a few hours later. His puzzlement was cleared up by a doctor who explained that because produce grew rapidly under the hot Jamaican sun, it had little chance to develop nutritious content. Consequently, all things fed on this produce lacked substance. Gage, convinced by this answer, concluded that in Jamaica “food offered ‘little substance and virtue’ and that the people’s stomachs were always ‘gaping and crying, Feed, feed.’”⁷²

The supposedly empty calories of the Darien’s country produce were typified by the Caledonian staple of yams. Deaths from illness had been relatively low in the first months of the expedition, but as the Scots entered the rainy season they experienced a sharp rise in the cases of yellow fever and malaria. When queried as to the cause of their illness, Thomas Drummond was adamant that poor diet and not the climate had been at fault: “The reason for their coming away was want of provisions and liquors, being forced to eat yams, &c. which brought sickness amongst y^m.”⁷³ After recording Drummond’s opinion, the Boston merchant John Borland reiterated that their illness was not “through any unhealthfullness of the climate, but merely want of wholesome dyet and liquors.”⁷⁴ The wholesome diet desired by Drummond was one based on imported provisions, especially bread, salted meats, and liquor. Turnbull, immediately after noting

⁷² Karen Kupperman, “Fear of Hot Climates in the Anglo-American Colonial Experience,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 41 (April, 1984): 230.

⁷³ Burton, “Mr. Borland to Mr. Mackay: Boston, 7th, 1699,” 152. Unfortunately, space does not permit me to include a discussion of disease in the Darien. It has been left aside because, although deaths tolls from disease were horrendous, they struck primarily *after* the Scots evacuated the colony. This was especially the case for the first colony. They boasted nearly 900 settlers when they deserted New Caledonia, but, by the time they arrived in port, the St. Andrew had lost 140 of her 300 person crew, the Caledonia, 100 of 300, the Unicorn, 150 of 300. Thus, disciplinary issues were largely related to provisions. Though, as the account of the voyage to New Caledonia suggested, disease was an aggravating factor throughout the settlement’s short life. For an account see Prebble, *The Darien Disaster*, 211-227.

⁷⁴ Burton, “Mr. Borland to Mr. Mackay: Boston, 7th, 1699,” *The Darien Papers*, 152. For a similar indictment see Insh, “The Abandonment of the First Colony,” 109.

that the bay was filled with fish “much mor delitious than any in Europ,” pleaded for provisions. Turnbull told his patron that settlers would live well in the Darien, but only “If ye send us bread aneuch.”⁷⁵ Likewise, Borland surmised that while the men of the second expedition had been weakened by hard toil, it was their paltry rations that caused the most strain on the settlers’ health. He complained of the “small allowance of our old salt and bad provisions which is pinching and straitning to all of us.”⁷⁶ In Scotland, a diet of rich foods had been the target of scorn by intellectuals since at least the sixteenth century. A rich diet that depended on exotic imported foods was suspected to be a cause of moral and physical weakness, whereas the traditional Scottish diet heavy in oats and plain meats was seen as a source of virtue and martial strength.⁷⁷ The common Scottish diet would also have shaped opinions about proper and desirable nutrition. Analysis of the diet of Scottish soldiers in 1689 by T.C. Smout and A.J. Gibson concluded that approximately 73 percent of their diet was grain based (including the contribution from barley used in beer). The rest of their diet was primarily meat derived, mainly cheese and milk but not meat itself. Meat was rarely a component of the Scottish diet and during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was only eaten regularly by the well-off.⁷⁸

The planters, freed from the strict rationing enforced on the ships, began hunting for new sources of sustenance with gusto. Yet, the intense work regimen enforced by the counsellors—eager to build fortifications and huts rather than clear and plant land—may not have left much time for gathering food.⁷⁹ By far the most easily accessible food

⁷⁵ Spencer, “Some Darien Letters,” 405.

⁷⁶ Borland, *Memoirs of Darien*, 55.

⁷⁷ David Allan, “Manners and Mustard: Ideas of Political Decline in Sixteenth-Century Scotland,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37(April, 1995): 242-243.

⁷⁸ Gibson and Smout, *Prices, Food and Wages*, Table 7.1, 228.

⁷⁹ See Chapter one for more information about settlement strategies undertaken by the leaders of the first and second expedition.

sources came from the Tule who regularly approached the new colony offering victuals as gifts or selling them for goods they desired. Benjamin Spencer told the Spanish that the Tule visited the Scots settlement almost daily; they “came in groups of six or eight, always bringing birds and potatoes.”⁸⁰ But the Tule came to trade and avail themselves of the novelties of Scottish goods, not to give food freely to the planters. An anonymous diarist wrote that, “The natives came frequently to us with wild plantains and wild fowll, and sell them to our men for white I[ron]...which they are very fond of.”⁸¹ Moreover, it seems that the Tule were keenly aware that they had the upper hand in this trade relationship. The Scots had to entertain small aboriginal trading parties if they hoped to have any chance of survival in the Darien. “It was in our interest to make them welcome,” reported Herries, “so that they came daily to us without any dread, and having staid till we were weary of them, went home again with some little presents.”⁸² Spencer agreed with Herries, and portrayed the Tule’s continual presence in the colony as a burden on the Scots’ tight resources rather than a boon. The Tule insisted that they visited to warn the Scots of planned Spanish attacks, but Spencer believed that “it was clear that the Indians came to eat and drink rather than to warn us.”⁸³ Despite their frequent visits the Tule did not contribute greatly to Scottish food reserves; at worst they may have actually drawn down certain Scottish supplies.

Denied easy access to food by the Tule’s trading acumen, the Scots began to scour the Darien for victuals. Their first victims were Sojourns, a type of land crab. “These Sojourns were very plentiful at our first Landing,” wrote Herries, “but they soon fail’d.”

⁸⁰ Gallup-Diaz, “The Spanish Management of Imperial Chaos,” 14.

⁸¹ Maidment, “Journal of the Scots, African, and Indian Fleet,” 363.

⁸² Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien*, 54.

⁸³ Gallup-Diaz, “The Spanish Management of Imperial Chaos,” 14.

Discouraged, the settlers desperately moved on to eat the rind behind the bark of a local tree. “Which was not unpleasant to the tast,” reported Herries, “but it being of no nourishment, and thought unwholesome, they were discharged to eat of it.”⁸⁴ Tree bark was by no means desired cuisine, but it appealed to increasingly hungry settlers because, like the crabs, it was readily accessible and could be gathered with little work. The Darien, abundant with fish and fowl, was certainly not barren of what Scots might deem to be wholesome food. Yet, plentiful foods such as fish still had to be caught to be eaten; a prospect which was problematic for settlers who had been outfitted with poor-quality nets by officials in Scotland. “Our Company, furnishing us only with a small Net made of Packthread for each Ship,” wrote Herries, “they [the settlers] could catch no more in a day than what serv’d the Counsellors and Sea Captains; and these Nets soon fail’d too.”⁸⁵ It seems likely that the Scots, hungry after a long voyage and likely desperate to try each new delicacy, quickly stripped the environment of easily gathered fruits and meats before they moved on to more intensive food gathering strategies. Some food sources remained abundant, but poor equipment, time constraints imposed by a harsh work schedule, and cultural preference dictated that country produce would remain a supplement to a diet highly dependent on imported provisions.

While at sea, the settlers’ allotments of imported provisions, although insufficient, had been delivered with regularity. But after the Scots settled, simmering divisions between the land and sea counsellors exploded into petty bickering; food was to be a key point of tension. William Paterson reported that the “Marine Chancellors did not only take all upon them, but lykewayes browbeat and discouraged every body els.” While at

⁸⁴ Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien*, 147.

⁸⁵ Hodges, 147.

sea, Paterson had anticipated that divisions between the “fresh-water” and “salt-water men”—derogatory labels used to indicate counsellors appointed to establish the colony on land and counsellors who were also captains of the fleet, respectively—would make the colony all but ungovernable in the long-term. His solution was a rotating presidency that began with the land counsellors and gave every president a one-month term.

Tragically, the council chose to adopt Paterson’s plan, but amended month-long terms to weekly terms.⁸⁶ The decision, as Paterson predicted, eroded almost all of the council’s legitimacy in the colony. “I urged that it would be to make a meer May game of the Government,” wrote Paterson with resignation, “and that it would reduce all things to uncertainty and contradictions, yet this determination of the rest was unalterable.”⁸⁷

Under the sway of a dissolute Council, the sea faction held inordinate power over the colony because it retained control of the imported provisions and dispensed them only intermittently.⁸⁸ Paterson accused the captains of purposeful deception and corruption, noting that a multitude of goods intended for the shore “were detained on board under the pretence they belonged to the ships.”⁸⁹ This was later confirmed by the testimony of Captain William Murray and Captain Lawrence Drummond. They pointed to Captain Pennycook as the worst offender. He purportedly refused the council’s orders to send

⁸⁶ Burton, “Report by William Paterson to the Directors,” 181.

⁸⁷ Burton, “Report by William Paterson to the Directors,” 181. Paterson was outraged at the stupidity of the Council’s decision. He later said it was the product of “mean spirits, raw heads, jealous and presumptuous pates, that had no virtue of their own, tho’ not a little presumption which made them so unwilling to believe it [in] other people.” Burton, “Paterson to Capt. Thomas Drummond: Edinburgh, 6 February, 1700,” 259. The Directors of the colony also reacted strongly to notion that the colony was bifurcated along the lines of sea and land men. See Burton, “Despatches and Letters from the Directors to the Council at the Colony: Edinburgh, 15 April, 1699,” 127.

⁸⁸ This practice was doubly prejudicial to the colony since the supplies spoiled much faster in the damp ships than they would have if placed ashore. Burton, “Despatches and Letters Sent by the Directors to the Colony on 10 February,” 269.

⁸⁹ Burton, “Report by William Paterson to the Directors,” 181.

ashore all of the provisions aboard his ship.⁹⁰ The sporadic dispensation of rations quickly took a toll upon the men working ashore. William Paterson lauded Thomas Drummond's ability to get the men to work in the early months of the expedition, "[f]or our men, though for the most parte in health, were generally weake for want of sufficient allowance of provisions and liquors, and this inconvenience upon them was the harder by reasone of the irregular serving of their scrimp allowances."⁹¹ The whimsical rule of Pennycook and his adherents ensured that the shore and the ship would become two different, and often opposed, social spaces.

The planters' dependence on scanty and erratically available imported provisions quickly broke down social proscriptions in New Caledonia. Clothing, the quintessential emblem of Scottish civility vis-à-vis the Tule, was sold off men's backs in the aggressive trade for Tule plantains. Thomas Drummond told the counsellors of the second expedition about the settlers' desperation: "He said all of the first Colony were honest men, and never left the settlement till they wanted provision to that degree that good Gentlemen among them sold the shirts off their backs for plantains." Perhaps the story was too fantastic for the counsellors to believe for they wrote the following shortly after relating Drummond's account: "with right reason and common sense...no body, except fools or interested knaves, can believe one word of it."⁹² But Herries' pamphlet confirmed Drummond's story. "There's no kind of Food to be had in that Mountainous & Woody Country, save Plantains, Bonnano's, Potatoe's and Indian Corn," explained Herries to his readers, "which are so scarce by reason of the Few Natives." The competition for this food was intense, even if the reward was fleeting. "Men sold their

⁹⁰ Insh, "The Abandonment of the First Colony," 111.

⁹¹ Burton, "Report by William Paterson to the Directors," 181.

⁹² Burton, "Letter from the Council to the Directors: Rising Sun, 23 December, 1699," 210-211.

New Shirts to the Indians' for 20 or 24 Plantains a piece, which would not serve a Man above three or four days." Rampant hunger among the Scots ensured that this continued to be a lively trade, and eventually the council had to order the settlers not to sell their clothing. Giving an anecdotal indication of the seriousness of the problem, Herries commented that it was a wise move, "else I verily believe our Men had been naked in two months after our Landing."⁹³

The differences between land and sea were also evident in the dispensation of alcohol provisions. According to Captains Murray and Lawrence, the seamen used the money they had been paid before leaving port to buy alcohol. In addition to its value as an intoxicant, alcohol was commonly viewed as safer than water and, in tropical climates, was used to combat illnesses brought on by the intense heat.⁹⁴ "The seamen having got credit," they reported to the directors, "made shift to buy Rum and strong liquors, but the landsmen must content themselves with water."⁹⁵ Herries also observed that alcohol was dispensed according to status. He alleged that captains received the largest allotments, though these did not last long. "[T]he Night they got their Allowance," Herries commented disdainfully, "they went to Bed as if they had been in their Winter Quarters at Ghent or Brussels, although they were oblig'd to drink fair water for a Week afterwards." In contrast, the "Subalterns"—the context of his usage here suggests he is referring to Planters—were "not allow'd one Spoonful" when Herries left in December.⁹⁶

⁹³ Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien*, 147. Herries does not provide a direct date for these occurrences. However, his description of the problems follows an account of the desertion. That, and the fact that his account ends in late December, suggests a mid-December date.

⁹⁴ Space does not permit a more robust discussion of the medical value of alcohol. See Kupperman, "Fear of Hot Climes," 220-221, 229.

⁹⁵ Insh, "The Abandonment of the First Colony: 28 November, 1699," 110.

⁹⁶ Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien*, 149.

The desertion of ten planters from the colony on 29 November, 1698, one month after they reached New Caledonia, offered further evidence of the deep divisions that separated the officers from the planters and volunteers.⁹⁷ Herries reported that these “poor Men” were “so starv’d, that they were oblig’d to desert to any body that could fill their Bellies.”⁹⁸ The men had stolen firearms and fled to Caret Bay, likely seeking the protection of the Tule leader Captain Diego. Within two days they were put in irons by Pennycook’s men and sentenced to a diet of bread and water.⁹⁹ Herries fleshed out this event and suggested that Pennycook and the council wished to hang the deserters but were prevented from doing so by popular sentiment: “They found they could not hang them, without running the hazard of being hang’d themselves for it afterwards.” But even the imprisonment of the men seemed suspect. Herries wrote that the men were “condemn’d...for a certain number of years to Slavery.”¹⁰⁰ His overwrought description of indentured servitude aside, the punishment was clearly out of proportion to the crime. The constitutions of the settlement required comparably light punishment for deserters: the “due chastisement of whipping” and a week of service for every day gone.¹⁰¹ By even the most draconian accounting practices, desertion and the theft of a gun could not amount to more than a year and a few weeks of service according to the colony’s Constitution.

The council’s firm reaction was likely intended to cow other settlers who, disenchanted and daily exploited, might consider escape an appealing possibility.

⁹⁷ Dates recorded in Insh, “Captain Pennycook’s Journall from the Madera Islands to New Caledonia in Darien,” 73.

⁹⁸ Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien*, 32.

⁹⁹ Insh, “Captain Pennycook’s Journall,” 74.

¹⁰⁰ Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien*, 32.

¹⁰¹ Burton, “Rules and Ordinances for the Government of the Colony,” 117.

Unchecked desertion would make short work of the isolated colony, already desperately short of supplies and facing the threat of Spanish attack. Intriguingly, the directors later complained that the punishments meted out to deserters from the first colony were too lenient. “Considering the power of your Grant,” chastised the directors, “you have hitherto shown too much tenderness to persons who (it seems) had but little either for your or your Colony’s interest. Why deserters of any kind should be allowed to pass unpunish’d severely, is what we cannot understand, considering the charge we are at transporting them.”¹⁰² The council, wary that the brutal discipline advocated by the directors might precipitate revolt, chose to preserve its legitimacy by moderating its retribution. As it was, the punishment—even though it stopped short of hanging—corroded the facade of the commonwealth. “If by the Constitutions of the Collony their Port be free,” Herries observed perceptively, “and if these Men be Planters by the Indenture or Contract made with the Company, they are Freemen, and not lyable to the lash of Martial Discipline.”¹⁰³ The sad irony of this event was that 30 November was St. Andrew’s Day. While hungry planters fled to the Tule for aid, Pennycook’s *St. Andrew* was the site of “a Festival.” The counsellors, together with their prospective ally Captain Andreas, dined well to honor Scotland’s patron saint.¹⁰⁴

On 14 December, 1698, reports had reached Caledonia of a planned attack by the Spanish Barliavento fleet complemented by a land force of 1500 troops.¹⁰⁵ The men were immediately set to work building fortifications under the direction of Captain Thomas Drummond. Paterson applauded Drummond for being able to mobilize the weakened

¹⁰² Burton, “Dispatches and Letters from the Directors to the Council at the Colony: Greenrock, 18 August, 1699,” 139.

¹⁰³ Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien*, 32.

¹⁰⁴ Hodges, 58. Burton, “Mr. Rose’s Journal,” 72.

¹⁰⁵ For details of the battle see Burton, “Letter—Mr. Montgomerie to the Council: 6 February, 1699,” 84-86.

men: “[he] did beyond what could be reasonably expected from him.”¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, the men did not respond well to the sudden demand for intense work. “Our Men being reduc’d to the foremention’d short Allowance,” Herries explained, “and wrought every day from Sun to Sun in felling of Trees, and Fortifying themselves, and seeing but little appearance of the Riches they were told of, began to be very faint hearted.”¹⁰⁷ At eight o’clock on the morning of 16 December, Pennycook reported that seven planters had “runn away.”¹⁰⁸ Herries was more forthcoming and added that “some of our best Men from the Ships” also fled.¹⁰⁹ This information, suggesting a large-scale desertion, helps to explain why Pennycook expended so much force trying to hunt down the runaways. He immediately dispatched Captain Fraser and eight men to search Caret Bay, but he also sent out a force to search inland and even asked the local Tule leaders to aid in the hunt.¹¹⁰ When eight or nine of the fugitives were caught, Herries said they “confes’d that they were going in to the *Spaniards*, where they might expect more Victuals and less Slavery than what they had there.”¹¹¹ Both desertions indicated dissatisfaction with the life planters and sailors had been forced to endure in the Darien. Yet, despite what Herries called “general murmurings,” the council maintained its rationing policy, fearing that otherwise they would all simply starve a few months earlier than expected.¹¹² In the official diary of the colony Mr. Rose, displaying his editorial skills to their fullest, wrote the following on 16 December: “The battery is going quickly on; our men are very hearty and seem to long for a visit from Jaque, that they might have a just pretence to their gold

¹⁰⁶ Burton, “Report by William Paterson to the Directors,” 181.

¹⁰⁷ Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien*, 146.

¹⁰⁸ Insh, “Captain Pennycook’s Journall,” 93.

¹⁰⁹ Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien*, 146.

¹¹⁰ Insh, “Captain Pennycook’s Journall,” 93.

¹¹¹ Hodges, *A Defence of the Scots Abdicating Darien*, 146.

¹¹² Hodges, 146.

mines not farr off.”¹¹³ The promise of gold was continually invoked by colonial officials to cajole and encourage disaffected settlers to submit to the government of New Caledonia. It was a cruel joke played upon starving settlers. Under the pressure of disease, hunger, rumor and despair the first expedition was forced to forsake the colony on 22 June, 1699.

The directors had written to expedition leaders urging patience: the “poverty occasion’d” by drought and famine “hath necessarily retarded us in our designs of sending you such recruits, as our inclinations did prompt us unto.”¹¹⁴ In September, rumours that the first expedition had abandoned New Caledonia began to filter into Scotland. These were denounced by directors as ploys by English malcontents and deemed “altogether malicious and false.”¹¹⁵ On 24 September, after months of careful preparation, the second expedition abruptly set sail for the Isthmus of Darien. It appears that the council, fearing that their commission was to be recalled because of “unbecoming behavior” they undertook while in port, ordered the fleet to hastily leave the harbor. In their rush, they left behind not only “the rice, flower, beef and other provisions, which they wrote for...but even the persons...whom they sent ashore for those provisions.”¹¹⁶ And once more the Scots found their holds laden with foodstuffs of questionable quality. An assessment of provisions dispatched by the council to the directors reported that the flour was thought to be “very ill dight” by all who ate it. Further, the council complained that the poor quality of the food had to be compensated for when doling out victuals:

¹¹³ Burton, “Mr. Rose’s Journal,” 76.

¹¹⁴ Burton, “Dispatches and Letters from the Directors to the Council at the Colony: 24 February, 1699,” 121.

¹¹⁵ Burton, “Letters and Dispatches by the Court of Directors on Hearing of the Desertion of the Colony: Greenrock, 22 September, 1699,” 163.

¹¹⁶ Burton, “A Report from the Particular Committee Appointed to Examine and Enquire into the Specialties of the Several Matter of Fact Represented by James Byres and Capt. Thomas Drummond, *hinc. Inde* against one another,” 231.

“great allowance must be made for unsufficiency, particularly of ye beef and flower, both being very ill of their kinds.”¹¹⁷

Planters and sailors aboard the relief ships the *Rising Sun*, *Duke of Hamilton*, *Hope of Bo’Ness*, and the *Hope* left Scotland confident that they would find an established colony and unaware that their own provisions were wanting. On 30 November, the ships sailed into Caledonia harbour to find an abandoned settlement overrun with tropical scrub.¹¹⁸ The terrible disappointment occasioned by the discovery was compounded a few days later when the council determined that the imported provisions brought from Scotland were insufficient to sustain the colony. They estimated that the food would only last the colonists six months “att short allowance,” whereas the brandy could not be depended upon to last beyond four months.¹¹⁹ Aware of the tenuous supply situation in Scotland, the council concluded that it would be best to divide the expedition’s forces between Jamaica and New Caledonia and to impose severe rationing upon those who stayed. Five hundred colonists would be chosen to resettle New Caledonia; the rest would be dispatched to Jamaica with three weeks of supplies.¹²⁰ Jamaica was likely chosen for its relative proximity and the near certainty that Scots settlers, sought after for their loyalty and martial skill, would find work quickly.¹²¹ Yet Jamaica, though eager for white labour, was no haven for settlers. The island, devastated by the earthquake that destroyed Port Royal in 1692, the invasion of the French in 1694, and a severe epidemic of malaria, had lost nearly a third of its white settlers during the

¹¹⁷ Burton, “From the Council to the Directors: Rising Sun, 3 February, 1700,” 241.

¹¹⁸ Borland, *Memoirs of Darien*, 31-32.

¹¹⁹ Burton, “Minutes of the Meetings of the Council: Rising Sun, 4 December, 1699,” 200.

¹²⁰ Burton, “Minutes of the Meetings of the Council: Rising Sun, 5 December, 1699,” 202.

¹²¹ For the preference for Scots servants see T.M. Devine, *Scotland’s Empire, 1600-1815* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 28.

1690s.¹²² The Committee that investigated the failure of the second colony strongly censured the counsellors for their decision. “[It] was not only a barbarous and unaccountable resolution in it self,” they concluded, “but was also the occasion of grumblings, divisions, and factions, among the officers, sailers, and planters, and could not well but have terminate in the utter ruine of the Colony.”¹²³

The council’s legitimacy, now bound up with these measures, was also under siege among the sailors. The council complained to the directors that the fleet’s stewards were “knaves”—likely referencing their role in the illicit trade of foodstuffs.¹²⁴ This serious but perhaps unavoidable traffic was fervently persecuted by the council. They wrote, “[we] are vexed beyond measure with hearing, judgeing, and punishing them and other rascals, of which there was never a greater collection among so few men.”¹²⁵ The council’s heedless use of discipline may have driven some sailors to desperation. Borland reported that some time between 9 and 14 December, nine seamen—referred to as nine “villains” by the Council—escaped by night in one of the *Rising Sun*’s boats. They fled to Portobello seeking Spanish aid, and “so betrayed the Condition of their poor Country-men in Caledonia” to the Spanish enemies.¹²⁶ Meanwhile, on shore many of the labourers were still waiting to hear who would go to Jamaica and who would be able to stay behind. In the interim, the council thought it “a peice [sic] of good conduct” to put all the planters to work building huts; they hoped to ensure that all the remaining settlers had accommodations. Ironically, Byres defended the decision as an attempt to forestall

¹²² 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, 1972), 163-164.

¹²³ Burton, “A Report from the Particular Committee Appointed to Examine and Enquire into the Specialties of the Several Matter of Fact Represented by James Byres and Capt. Thomas Drummond, *hinc. Inde* against one another,” 234.

¹²⁴ For more details about illicit trade see Burton, “A Representation by James Byres,” 225.

¹²⁵ Burton, “Letter from the Council to the Directors: *Rising Sun*, 23 December, 1699,” 217.

¹²⁶ Borland, *Memoirs of Darien*, 33.

discontent among the settlers who would remain in Caledonia: “all our design, was to prevent a mutiny.”¹²⁷ But Thomas Drummond observed that this decision, in tandem with the harsh provisioning, irritated the settlers greatly, “[e]very one saying, what reason had they to work or build hutts for others, they not knowing wither they were to stay or goe?”¹²⁸

On 15 December, Captain Thomas Drummond came before the Council and suggested an alternative to the Jamaica plan. Rather than sending all the men away, he wanted dispensation to take 150 armed men to join in a Tule attack against the Spanish. He argued that the raids would lighten the stress on Caledonia’s provisions and possibly bring unforeseen benefits to the Colony.¹²⁹ The council equivocated once more, and delayed its decision about Drummond’s plan. Byres would later argue that he had the best interests of the colony at heart, not wanting to be the “accessory to the murder of 150 men” and worrying that the venture would “raise a clamour that we were come to pyrate or buccaneer.”¹³⁰ But the settlers had reached a breaking point. The indecisiveness of the council was seized upon by Drummond’s supporters, who began promoting the “reasonableness therof” to officers and planters. These appeals hit a raw nerve, for the council noted that settlers quickly began to “talk of using violence to gett their designe effectuate.”¹³¹

The council, spying a mutiny on the horizon, investigated. They uncovered a plot to seize and hang all of the counsellors, “in caice they would not divest themselves of ye

¹²⁷ James Byres, *A Letter to a Friend at Edinburgh from Rotterdam, Giving an Account of the Scots affairs in Darien*, ECCO (Edinburgh: 1702), 117.

¹²⁸ Burton, “Queries by Captain Drummond,” 219.

¹²⁹ Burton, “Minutes of Meetings of the Council: Anna of Caledonia, 15 December, 1699,” 203.

¹³⁰ Byres, *A Letter to a Friend*, 117.

¹³¹ Burton, “Letter from the Council to the Directors: Rising Sun, 23 December, 1699,” 212.

government in favours of ye conspirators.” After this was accomplished, the mutineers planned to seize the *Rising Sun* and the *Hope*, both of which were rumoured to have large sums of the Company’s money aboard.¹³² The council quickly apprehended, charged and executed the ringleader of this mutiny, a carpenter by the name of Alexander Campbell—labelled by one witness as the “great seducer of ye Colony.”¹³³ The Council of War accused Campbell of speaking out against the government, “by whose instigation ye Councill doeth not yet know,” after they failed to give Captain Drummond’s plans “speedy answers.” He was found guilty of “mutinous association, and villainous designe of murter, being both crimes meritorious of death.”¹³⁴ Despite the council’s suspicions that the mutiny was to be undertaken by “a great many officers, volunteers, planters, and seamen,” Campbell was the only would-be mutineer to be executed.¹³⁵ By focusing the power of the state on one individual, the trial and execution allowed the government to re-establish its legitimacy and to compel obedience in others through the measured, and very public, application of terror.

The intense and violent overthrow of hierarchy connoted by a mutiny required a severe response from the government. But before it could convict Alexander Campbell, the Council of War had to prove that it was he—and not the government of New Caledonia—who had acted against the common good. If they could claim that they were defending the commonwealth by prosecuting a self-interested deviant the council might retain, or even gain, public legitimacy. Thus, they accused Campbell of the following crime:

¹³² Burton, “Minutes of Meetings of the Council: Anna of Caledonia, 18 December, 1699,” 204.

¹³³ Burton, “Minutes of Meetings of the Council: Rising Sun, 18 December,” 1699, 205-206.

¹³⁴ Burton, “Minutes of Meetings of the Council: Anna of Caledonia, 18 December, 1699,” 204.

¹³⁵ Burton, “Minutes of Meetings of the Council: Anna of Caledonia, 18 December, 1699,” 204.

[C]ontrary to all the laws, divine and humane, knowne and observed among civilized people, the said Alex^r Campbell hath frequently exprest his dissatisfaction with the allowance dayly given out by order of a generall meeting, for subsisting the Colony, albeit yr be not the least distinction made twixt officers and planters, and yt he himself did not alledge ye stoeping of his oune victualls.¹³⁶

Campbell confessed to grumbling about the allowance given, but he strained to point out that he never accused the counsellors of withholding rations.¹³⁷ But the Council of War pushed to represent Campbell's actions, and indeed the actions of the all the mutineers, as selfish and contrary to the public good. By compelling a confession, the Council publicly established that they had never withheld food nor failed in their duties as stewards of the Colony's goods. Campbell's confession also discredited his dangerous allegations that the "Councillors had wholly disheartened the Colony, by diminishing their victualls, to enrich their oune pockets."¹³⁸ Despite the attempt to portray Campbell as a wild-eyed deviant, the depositions gathered by the council revealed that life in New Caledonia was not as idyllic as the council maintained.

It seems there was widespread fear among the men that the colony planned to sell the men into servitude in Jamaica. Alexander Campbell testified that he heard of a "designe of sending 500 of the best men to Jamaica to be sold."¹³⁹ The rumour had begun when some of the officers being sent away, concerned about their safety, approached Byres for firearms. Byres not only refused their request, he also tried to bribe all the officers. He told them "it would be best for them to hold their tongues; for, if they conceal'd their condition until he dispose of the men in such a manner as he should find

¹³⁶ Burton, "Minutes of Meetings of the Council: Rising Sun, 18 December, 1699," 204.

¹³⁷ Burton, "Minutes of Meetings of the Council: Rising Sun, 18 December, 1699," 205.

¹³⁸ Burton, "Minutes of Meetings of the Council: Rising Sun, 18 December, 1699," 205-206.

¹³⁹ Burton, "Minutes of Meetings of the Council: Rising Sun, 18 December, 1699," 205.

most reasonable, he would give all of them money.”¹⁴⁰ Predictably, Byres’ insinuations ignited a rash of speculation throughout the colony. Scottish planters who had expected to become prosperous in the Darien were not pleased at the prospect of indentured servitude in Jamaica—the “charnel house” of the colonial world where the life expectancy for Europeans was forty.¹⁴¹ Many planters were relieved when they heard of Captain Drummond’s alternative proposition. Ensign Spark told Campbell that if he was ordered to go to Jamaica, “he would be one of ye number” that went to attack the Spanish with Drummond.¹⁴² The Captain’s Sergeant also gave Campbell the details of the plan, after which the sergeant opined to Campbell, “that was better than to be sold.” Upon hearing this news Campbell, liking neither option, confessed to being “very much cast doune.”¹⁴³ The notion that the counsellors—Pennecuik’s benevolent “wise Senat”—who were meant to provide for and protect the settlers would consider selling them like chattel was appalling. Even the threat of indenture was rending the social fabric of New Caledonia: the men felt like battered and betrayed pawns of the council’s greed.

The belief that planters were to be sold played into mistrust fostered by the rationing situation. In Campbell’s confession, he wondered why the council did not use the provisions it was hoarding, “which he thought might have maintained them here, if the Councill took care of getting provisions.”¹⁴⁴ Campbell began to intrigue against the council. The depositions indicate that he approached many of his fellow settlers searching for solutions to the situation. He tried to persuade Andrew Logan, a 31-year-old sergeant,

¹⁴⁰ Burton, “A Report from the Particular Committee Appointed to Examine and Enquire into the Specialties of the Several Matter of Fact Represented by James Byres and Capt. Thomas Drummond, *hinc. Inde* against one another,” 234.

¹⁴¹ Trevor Burnard, “‘The Countrie Continues Sicklie’: White Mortality in Jamaica, 1655-1780,” *The Society for the Social History of Medicine*, 12 (1999): 46, 52.

¹⁴² Burton, “Minutes of Meetings of the Council: Rising Sun, 18 December, 1699, 205.

¹⁴³ Burton, “Minutes of Meetings of the Council: Rising Sun, 18 December, 1699, 205.

¹⁴⁴ Burton, “Minutes of Meetings of the Council: Rising Sun, 18 December, 1699,” 205.

that the counsellors “took no right method for the Colony’s thriveing.”¹⁴⁵ To force the counsellors to use their money to aid the settlers, Campbell and his supporters planned to confront the council. He told William McLeod that he and a few men had drafted a “proposition to ye Councillors.” If they refused to agree to its terms the counsellors would be hanged and the mutineers would seize the ships.¹⁴⁶ Campbell’s proposition strove to reinstate the commonwealth so greedily (as it seemed to these men) cast aside by the council. If the council refused to atone, the mutineers were ready to bring them to rough justice. Then they would escape with the ships laden with the Council’s secreted supplies. Campbell told McLeod that if they sold the ships and ran off with the money on board “we might live happy enough in the enjoyment of these things.”¹⁴⁷ Mutiny was a last resort.

Campbell was executed at two o’clock on the afternoon of 20 December, 1699. The Council of War wrote that Campbell’s death would serve as a symbol to the colony: “for the terrour of others in time comeing who may have any such devilish designs.”¹⁴⁸ The colony’s clergymen attempted to intercede on Campbell’s behalf, urging the government to display their wisdom by banishing Campbell instead. Borland reported that the council “would not yield to it.”¹⁴⁹ Campbell used his execution to publicly establish that it was the council, and not he, who had shirked their responsibilities and played the devil in New Caledonia. The council recorded the following account of Campbell’s death for the directors: “Wee always fancied the rascall expected relief to the last minute, when he said, Lord forgive them who brought me on this lock, and so,

¹⁴⁵ Burton, “Minutes of Meetings of the Council: Rising Sun, 18 December, 1699,” 207.

¹⁴⁶ Unfortunately this document is not extant

¹⁴⁷ Burton, “Minutes of Meetings of the Council: Rising Sun, 18 December, 1699,” 206.

¹⁴⁸ Burton, “Minutes of Meetings of the Council: Rising Sun, 18 December, 1699,” 204.

¹⁴⁹ Borland, *Memoirs of Darien*, 34.

without help, jumped off.”¹⁵⁰ The severe and public display of colonial authority brought a temporary quiescence to New Caledonia, though Byres himself planted new seeds of discord when he imprisoned Thomas Drummond and his men on the pretence they were involved in the “hellish designs on foot.”¹⁵¹ There is little doubt that the council found itself in an uncomfortable bind; the wise decision to institute rationing would have been elicited grievances among any group of settlers. Yet, the council’s strained legitimacy had been steadily dismantled by a litany of ill-considered policies advocated by James Byres. In the wake of Campbell’s execution, the council looked to quietly remove further grounds for dissent by dropping the Jamaica plan and, without explanation, telling the directors of the “absolute necessity that the dayly allowance be augmented.”¹⁵² Despite their protestations about Campbell’s selfish intriguing, increasing allowances was a wordless admission that they had transgressed social expectations.

Villain, rascal, seducer, and devil were all labels used by those in authority to dismiss and diminish the character of those settlers and sailors who tired of grumbling and pushed their complaints to the level of open disobedience. But settlers had few other options under the draconian rule of the Council of Caledonia. The supposedly free and open government that enticed settlers to emigrate was run by men too jealous of authority to entertain the objections of others. Almost all observers attacked the leaders of New Caledonia for their incompetence. The directors, oblivious to the disaffections caused in part by their spirited misrepresentations of the Darien, endorsed the use of more force to ensure discipline among the settlers. Following the collapse of the first colony, they

¹⁵⁰ Burton, “Letter from the Council to the Directors: Rising Sun, 23 December, 1699,” 212.

¹⁵¹ Burton, “A Report from the Particular Committee Appointed to Examine and Enquire into the Specialties of the Several Matter of Fact Represented by James Byres and Capt. Thomas Drummond, *hinc. Inde* against one another,” 232.

¹⁵² Burton, “Letter from the Council to the Directors: Rising Sun, 23 December, 1699,” 212.

dispatched Captain Alexander Campbell of Fonab, “a Gentleman of good reputation and parts.” He was to recover deserters from the first colony and punish them severely; his instructions were to undertake “exemplary punishment to the terroure of others.”¹⁵³

John Borland, Maxwell, and Campbell—Scots merchants in Boston—were among the few observers to highlight the abject brutality of New Caledonia’s leaders and their failure to act in the interest of the common good. In dramatic fashion, they told the tale of the first colony’s escape to New York as it had been reported to them. They accused Captain Robert Drummond of withholding flour from the men and feeding the sick men sour oatmeal and water. “[W]hen they complain, to condole or comfort them,” Borland and Maxwell said the Captain responded with anything but “sweet Christian-like consolation!” Drummond—portrayed as a pitiless monster—growled at the settlers for complaints about their rations, “Dogs! Its too good for you.” Every morning, the officers aboard Drummond’s ship reputedly asked the surgeons how many men had died during the night. An answer of four or five would provoke indignant rage: “Why, (reply they,) what! noe more?” These Bostonian Scots concluded their tale by reporting the opinion of many colonials about New Caledonia’s Council. “[T]he commentary made by others,” they wrote, “is what are those their principles and practices of— — From such, Good Lord, deliver us!”¹⁵⁴ Although the tale was overwrought, the allusion to devilry, not so subtle even if muted, attacked the council for their cruel denial of food rations to sick men and their inhumane application of discipline.

¹⁵³ Burton, “Instructions form the Court of Directors of the Company of Scotland trading to Africa and the Indies to Captain Alexander Campbell of Fonabb, one the new Counsellours of the said Company’s Colony in America,” 178.

¹⁵⁴ Burton, “Letter—John Borland, John Campbell, and John Maxwell, to Hugh Fraser,” 158-159.

The settlers were oppressed by a regime of discipline where they had expected relative freedom. They were subjected to constant hunger by skimpy food allocations and gruelling work regimens. Moreover, they found themselves stranded in a land where food was ephemeral and the promise of gold slid further away with every passing day. The planters' disenchantment with the life they found in New Caledonia was palpable and it was a cause of much anxiety in the colony. Most settlers likely sympathized with Sergeant William Robertson's simple assessment of New Caledonia. Testifying to the frustrations of daily life in the Darien—wanting liquor, food, freedom, and wealth—Robertson said “he thought it a very sober life.”¹⁵⁵ Astonishingly, even after months of poor leadership and inadequate food some settlers still looked upon the Darien as a refuge; a place where they could leave behind the certain poverty of life in Scotland. Peter M’Ferran, a twenty-three year old planter, received Campbell’s overtures coldly, contending that “if the Countrey were planted, and victuals in it, wee might live well enough here.”¹⁵⁶ The young labourer’s optimism bore witness to the enduring appeal of life in New Caledonia, even as it was weathering its darkest hour.

¹⁵⁵ Burton, “Minutes of Meetings of the Council: Rising Sun, 18 December, 1699,” 208.

¹⁵⁶ Burton, “Minutes of Meetings of the Council: Rising Sun, 18 December, 1699,” 207.

Conclusion

But to my great greiff the concerns of our Company and those concerned in itt seem to be so very unprosperous as if Fate had declared itself a Violent revengefull Enemy.

Robert Innes, Supercargo of the *Speedwell*, 1702

When news of New Caledonia's final collapse reached Scotland in September, 1700, the nation was consumed by anger, recrimination and soul-searching. But the idea of a colony in the Darien was resilient. A government official assessed the mood of the Scottish people with disbelief: "They are keen as ever in asserting the right to Caledonia; the sad news has rather increased their earnestness in this matter."¹ To modern observers it may seem incredible that the Scots and Caledonians clung with such tenacity to an impractical, even destructive, colony. Yet the nation's colonial aspirations had long been sustained by a powerful belief in providence. In 1696, amidst English opposition to the venture, Robert MacKenzie had remarked confidently that "the many invidious, tho' vain Attempts already made against the Scotch-India-Company...[are] a certain Presage of its future Success." He followed with a prayer "Hoping Divine Providence will protect the Innocence of the said Company's just and lawful endeavors."² The powerful alliance between the Scots and Godly design was nothing if not intensified following the failure of the second expedition. The Church of Scotland, especially eager to minister to the wounded psyche of the nation, urged Scots to remember that adversity was a sign of the nation's elect status:

The Sovereign Lord of the World might suffer us to Florish like other Nations, and go on and Prosper, even in our Wickedness: But WE! His own Israel... WE to play the Fool and Act the Mad-man, thus to Forsake our COVENANTED

¹ George Insh, *The Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies* (London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), 226.

² J.S., *Some Account of the Transaction of Mr. William Paterson* (1696), Preface.

GOD...this is altogether Intollerable and highly Criminal; so that a Jealous God seems fixedly Resolved either to REFORME us, or utterly DESTORY us: This is clearly written upon the Print of every Providence we meet with.³

The Scots lived in a world where the Lord was active and his intentions could be discerned in every happenstance occurrence. Religious leaders viewed the collapse of New Caledonia—by any measure a calamity—as a dire indictment of Scottish morality. Yet they held out hope to the battered Scottish people: if the country should but repent, “a Wonder-Working God may yet Raise up out of the Ruines of our late Glorious Undertaking another COLONY (if not the same) better purged, and upon more solide Foundations then formerly.”⁴ Even as Scots mourned New Caledonia, providential believers comforted the nation with the prospect of new, and better, colonial projects.

Tales of gold in Africa and the East Indies gave the Directors of the Company of Scotland an outlet for their renewed imperial designs. Their revived interest in the “Orient” was encouraged by the unexpected success of the *African Merchant* in Guinea. Dispatched in 1699, she returned to Scotland ten months later laden with the riches of the Antipodes; rice, gold, and ivory.⁵ Only months after Caledonia’s surrender, the Company had already dispatched the *Speedwell*, *Content* and *Speedy Return* to these new lands of plenty. The *Speedwell*, destined for Indian and China, left late in 1700 with instructions to procure tea, peppers and silk that could be sold to Scotland’s advantage. The Company’s eastern designs were frustrated, however, when the ship was wrecked under

³ *The Sighs and Groans of a Sinking Kingdom in an Humble Address to the Parliament of Scotland*, EEBO (London: 1700), 14. A similar, if less elaborate claim appeared in the following the collapse of the first colony: “for whom HE Loves He chastens sore, / Therefore our Trade we need not fear.” *Scotland’s Lament for their Misfortunes* (Edinburgh, 1700).

⁴ *The Sighs and Groans of a Sinking Kingdom*, 10.

⁵ George Insh, *The Company of Scotland*, 249-250.

suspicious circumstances off the coast of Malacca.⁶ Eager to reproduce the success of the *African Merchant*, the Company sent *Content* and *Speedy Return* to trade with Africa in 1701. It took the Company some years to discover that both ships had been seized by pirates off the coast of St. Mary's Island near Madagascar.⁷ Although these voyages are usually dismissed as the last gasps of the Company of Scotland, they bore witness to the enduring belief in salvation through trade.

For Caledonians, just as their Scottish brethren, the new world remained a promising land of plenty and renewal where intrepid men and women could make their fortunes. Though few settlers escaped unscathed from the Darien, many of those who did remained in the Americas. Among the more notable were men like John Anderson, Captain of the *Unicorn*, who went on to become a judge and then Governor of New Jersey.⁸ There was also Colonel John Campbell who settled in nearby Jamaica in 1700 and founded an influential kinship network that brought "opulent fortunes" to enterprising men travelling from Argyll.⁹ And finally, there was the "citizen of empire" Samuel Vetch, a veteran of Flanders and the invasion of England in 1688. He landed in New York after the desertion of the first colony and in short-order charmed his way into the family of the influential Scottish merchant Robert Livingstone. In 1708, Vetch approached Queen Anne's court with an audacious proposal to conquer New France. Vetch not only won Anne's support, he was promoted to Colonel and promised the governorship of Canada if his "Glorious Enterprise" succeeded. After several

⁶ See Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies, Being the Observation and Remarks of Capt. Alexander Hamilton* (Edinburgh, 1727), 87.

⁷ Insh, *The Company of Scotland*, 260-262.

⁸ David Dobson, "Seventeenth-Century Scottish Communities in the Americas," in *Scottish Communities Abroad in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Alexia Grosjean and Steve Murdoch (Brill, 2005), 130. John Prebble, *The Darien Disaster* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1970), 330.

⁹ Douglas Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World, 1750-1820* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 56.

disappointments, Vetch finally became the Governor of Nova Scotia in 1714.¹⁰ The individual success of these Scots was a harsh contrast to the ordeals they had faced under the benevolent, but misguided, leadership of Scottish authorities.

While some settlers rejected the authority of the Company, others used the lessons learned in the Darien to advance Scottish trade in Africa and the East Indies. Our story ends with such a man: Robert Drummond, Captain of the *Caledonia* and the ill-fated *Speedy Return*. When the *Speedy Return* was seized, Robert Drummond and a few of his men were put ashore in Madagascar. They quickly met fellow castaways from an East India ship, among whom was Robert Drury.¹¹ Through Drury's journal we are given a rare glimpse of the transformations effected in Drummond by his time in the Darien. Shortly after landing, Drummond organized a trek to the nearest harbour frequented by Europeans. Along the way, the party was captured and forced into slavery by the local inhabitants, the Antandroy. Frustrated by his sudden captivity, Drummond immediately began plotting his escape. With the aid of other castaways, Drummond captured the leader and his son and fled; they were chased across the desert and eventually surrounded by the Antandroy. Drummond and his men deftly slipped away in the dead of night, avoiding the bloodbath that Drury and his fellow castaways suffered through the next

¹⁰ G.M. Waller, *Samuel Vetch, Colonial Enterpriser*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960).

¹¹ The authenticity of Drury's account of Madagascar had, until recently, been a subject of intense debate. One school of thought maintained the journal was a hoax by Daniel Defoe; another maintained that it was an undependable historical source. However, new work by Mike Pearson has shown Drury's account to contain highly accurate details about the local inhabitants, the Antandroy. The source itself, though problematic in places, is demonstrated to be a generally reliable travel account. Mike Parker Pearson, "Reassessing 'Robert Drury's Journal' as a Historical Source for Southern Madagascar," *History in Africa* 23 (1996).

day.¹² Throughout these events Drury portrayed Drummond as a decisive leader of men, though he retained the prideful character that often brought him into conflict with others.

When Drury sat down to consider the massacre some years later, he blamed it partly on the inexperience of his commander. “[O]ur own young Capt. Younge,” concluded Drury, “wanted Ripeness of Judgement, and Experience in the world; for Capt. Drummond, as I well remember, oppos’d him in several things.”¹³ Drummond, though now described by Drury as a man of the world possessed “of gallant enterprising Spirits,” had himself been charged with naiveté and poor judgment only a few years earlier.¹⁴ William Paterson had compared Robert Drummond and his fellow counsellors, to “novices in University whose narrow understandings are confounded by their raw, rude, and mistaken conception of things.”¹⁵ The Darien, and his life overseas since then, had taught Drummond a confidence denied to him during the heady days of New Caledonia. But life in the Isthmus had perhaps taught Drummond something else: he had learned a healthy scepticism of providential design.

Despite their status as slaves, the Antandroy leader had initially received Drury and Drummond with great honours. The ownership of white men was viewed by his people as a status symbol. But Captain Drummond obstinately refused to partake of the king’s hospitality and asked him leave to return to his own country. The king was incensed and told Drummond that, “there are several Kings on this Island [that] have

¹² Robert Drury, *Madagascar: or, Robert Drury's Journal During Fifteen Years of Captivity on that Island*, ECCO (London, 1731), 60.

¹³ Drury, 63.

¹⁴ Drury, 42.

¹⁵ Burton, “To the Reverend Alexander Shields: Edinburgh, 6 February, 1700,” *The Darien Papers; Being a Selection of Original Letters and Official Documents Relating to the Establishment of a Colony at Darien by the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies, 1695-1700* (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, 1849), 261.

white Men live among them, and why shall not I, since our Gods have sent you here?”¹⁶

According to Drury, the King’s explanation provoked an immediate and virulent response from Drummond:

Let him know that if I could have suspected this before-hand, he should never have seen my Face alive; I would have sent some of their black Souls to Hell: It is not their Gods, it’s nothing but Fortune and Chance that has put me into his Power, and by FORTUNE I may be deliver’d from him.¹⁷

Robert Drummond’s words have weathered time and editing, but it is still possible to discern in them an inordinately fiery reaction to the notion of providence. He had learned through his painful experiences overseas that life was not ordained, but a thing of chance and fortune susceptible to the foibles of men.

Drummond’s rejection of providence highlights a weakness that permeated the Scottish dream of empire. For Scotland, a small country on the periphery of European politics, the dream of empire remained tenable only as long as the power of providence reigned unchallenged. A providential empire baited settlers and backers alike with the promise of wealth and glory. It elevated Scots to the level of the chosen and rebuked attacks on their colony as ‘tests’ of faith and morality. Even New Caledonia’s collapse failed to shake providential convictions among Scots who interpreted it as a punishment for the nation’s vice. But the Scottish people were far removed from daily life on the Isthmus of Darien. Here, everyday experience challenged, subverted and transformed Scottish preconceptions about the Americas. Settlers expecting a fertile land teeming with gold found themselves instead to be plagued by malaria and Spaniards. As disappointment mounted about life on the Isthmus, settlers began to question both

¹⁶ Drury, *Madagascar*, 21.

¹⁷ Drury, 21.

providence and the Scottish empire it guaranteed. In the Darien, providence had cleared few trees, guaranteed few alliances, and quelled few rebellious stomachs.

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