The Duchy of Courland's Colonial Networks and Encounters from the Baltic to the Atlantic: 1638-1698

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Preface

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the History Degree Committee.

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John Freeman

Abstract

The Duchy of Courland and Semigallia, a vassal to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and constrained at the eastern edge of the Baltic Sea, was an unlikely candidate for colonial expansion. Yet, in the mid- to late seventeenth century, the ambitions of the dukes, in particular Duke Jakob Kettler (reigned 1642-1682), provided it with a brief colonial presence in Tobago and The Gambia. The Duchy is an extreme example of a small-power coloniser, and it supplies a stark alternative to narratives of domination by Western European polities. These powers loom large in post-colonial studies of the Atlantic, in part due to their longevity as empires and their powerful effect on world history. Through the analysis of Courland, this study seeks to uncover the networks used by a weak political entity in pursuing colonial trade. It connects two spaces, the Baltic and the Atlantic in order to determine how much transfer of experience and knowledge took place between these contexts. Comparing spaces uncovers a neglected post-colonial angle to the field of Couronian colonialism, which emphasises that Courland was a colonial power in both Europe and the Atlantic. Above all the study portrays the broad range of relations and encounters involved in shaping the vassal's fortunes outside of the Baltic. Consequently, a revision of previous historiography on Courland is needed in order to move the field away from the single metropolitan point of Duke Jakob and thereby appreciate the wider connectivity of colonial actors and experiences.

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Note on Names and Toponyms

Where appropriate I have attempted to use the place names which existed at the time. As a result, many modern toponyms have been replaced by their previous German names. The exception to this rule is for prominent cities whose name in English has not changed since the seventeenth century, for example Copenhagen not København. The table below provides a guide to toponyms which are different from their modern counterparts. In the case of names, I have tried to match spelling to the language of that persons' country of origin. Where a name denotes a title, I have written this in English when it concerns a polity but in the person's language when describing a smaller place. For example, 'of Brandenburg-Prussia' but 'von Treiden'. The exception is Ruprecht von der Pfalz instead of Rupert of the Palatinate.

Modern Usage	As Written in the Thesis
Ventspils	Windau
Kurzeme	Courland
Zemgale	Semigallia
Daugava	Düna
Liepāja	Libau
Jelgava	Mitau

Kolka	Kolken
Lielupe	Aa
Kuldīga	Goldingen
Engure	Angern
Baldone	Baldohn
Skrunda	Schrunden
Turaida	Treiden
Vārve	Warwen
Dobele	Doblen
Tallinn	Reval
Elsinore	Helsingør
Norborg	Norburg
Zealand	Sjælland
Oslo	Christiana
Flushing	Vlissingen
Gdańsk	Danzig
Kołobrzeg	Kolberg
Trzebicz	Trebitsch
Hyršov	Hirschoff
Banjul	Bayona
Kunta Kinteh Island	St Andreas Island/ James Island
Scarborough	Lampsinsstad

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The Duchy of Courland's Colonial Networks and Encounters from the Baltic to the Atlantic: 1638-1698

Introduction

The traces of Couronian colonialism in the Atlantic Ocean are small and often incidental. Tobago, a land named by the Spanish after its abundant tobacco, features countless colonial legacies in its toponyms. The capital, Scarborough; its old fort, Fort King George; and the neighbouring settlements of Windsor and Pembroke, indicate a British imperial past which formally ended on 31 August 1962 with the independence of Trinidad and Tobago. The Courland River, flowing through Plymouth and into Great Courland Bay, recalls a more obscure colonial heritage. This past is commemorated by a monument which, in a style untypical of post-colonial rhetoric, proclaims itself 'in memory of the bold, enterprising and industrious Courlanders from far away Latvia on the Baltic shores who had lived in this area named after them.'[1]

In 'far away Latvia', the port town of Ventspils also features slight reminders of a colonial past. There is now no Duchy of Courland and Semigallia, which colonised Tobago briefly in the mid-seventeenth century, only the administrative regions of Kurzeme and Zemgale, but there are curious colonial monuments. Amongst them a shopping centre named Tobago, as well as a sculptural water fountain arranged to replicate the masts of a ship which landed in the River Gambia in 1651. There is no correspondent monument marking the Couronian presence in Africa. The now rapidly eroding Kunta Kinteh Island, where the Courlanders built a fort, still has a ruin, but the brickwork is English. The monuments in nearby Juffure mark the grim history of the slave trade, a system in which Courland participated.

The colonial legacies may not be very apparent in the modern state of Latvia, as they are in Britain, the Netherlands, Spain, or even Germany. The period of Couronian colonisation in the Atlantic was short, lasting at most fifty years. However, the diminutive Baltic vassal state of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a small part of a larger colonial phenomenon which formed networks of interactions, exploitative economies, and migratory flows of a transformative global effect. Courland entered colonialism from a distinct and interesting position. It lay at the far east of the Baltic Sea, a small power without full independence or the benefit of abundant resources. It also possessed a past of Baltic colonisation whereby medieval crusaders subjugated an indigenous people in Europe. The case study offers an alternative perspective on Atlantic colonialism as practiced by larger powers which now possess more apparent legacies of global expansion. Unfortunately, Courland's effect on the

[1] More information on Tobagonian toponyms is available in Arie Boomert, 'The Oldest Place Names of Tobago' in *Archaeology and Anthropology: Journal of the Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology* 17:1 (2011), 1-23.

historiography of colonialism has been almost as slight as its visibility in public history. This thesis aims to place Courland's past within current debates about the early modern expansion of Europe into the Atlantic and determine whether Couronian trading, diplomatic, and colonial relationships, created by this process were distinct.

A Brief History of Couronian Colonialism

The Duchy of Courland constituted the last remnants of the Livonian Order, Catholic crusaders of mostly Germanic origin, who invaded the Baltic region in the thirteenth century. The Livonian Order was a branch of the Teutonic Order of Knights which, at its largest, spread from Pomerania to Reval. The Masters of the Livonian Order, chosen amongst the leading knightly families, ruled in what is now Latvia and Estonia. The Latvian, Liv, Estonian, and Couronian natives were supressed for their paganism and exploited for their labour. Economically the new Teutonic arrivals were linked to the rest of Northern Europe by the Hanseatic League, whose main regional centre stood in Riga.

The Order suffered decline from the fifteenth century onwards and found itself encircled by more powerful polities. In 1558, Ivan IV of Muscovy invaded Livonia, beginning the Livonian Wars, which transformed the entire structure of the polity. The Order secularised, abandoning its Catholic roots, to become Lutheran. The Grand Master, Gotthard Kettler, became a duke, a hereditary rather than elected role. From 1561, Duke Gotthard submitted his new duchy, first to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and then, upon its creation in 1569, to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Riga and the land north of the River Düna were ceded directly into Poland, leaving the Kettlers with Courland and Semigallia, a sliver of land corresponding to the south and west of modern-day Latvia (see Figure 1).

The new Duchy of Courland was subject to the Polish-Lithuanian monarchy. The duke ruled with his own council, but only wielded significant powers in foreign affairs. In an overwhelmingly agricultural economy influenced by Polish-Lithuanian political customs, the nobility exercised wide-ranging privileges including, exclusive membership of the duke's council, powers of veto, and regular assembly. They also possessed autonomy in their own estates where the demand for Baltic grain in Western Europe had encouraged a strict system of serfdom. The power of the nobles stood in stark contrast to the towns who were only represented in the parliament (*Landtag*) by the duke himself. Noble complaints against the duke were taken very seriously by the Polish-Lithuanian monarchy, which expelled co-Duke Wilhelm Kettler in 1617. Consequently, the duchy almost died with the childless co-Duke Friedrich (reigned 1587-1642) but was reprieved when strenuous lobbying secured the inheritance of Wilhelm's only son, Jakob.[2]

[2] Mārīte Jakovļeva, 'Statehood on the Territory of Latvia during the Early Modern Times: The Duchy of Courland and Semigallia' in *Collection of Scholarly Articles in 2 volumes, Latvia and Latvians* Vol. 2, eds. Antra Legzdiņa, Filips Birzulis, Maija Opse and Māra Rūmniece (Riga: Latvian Academy of Sciences, 2018), 280-311.

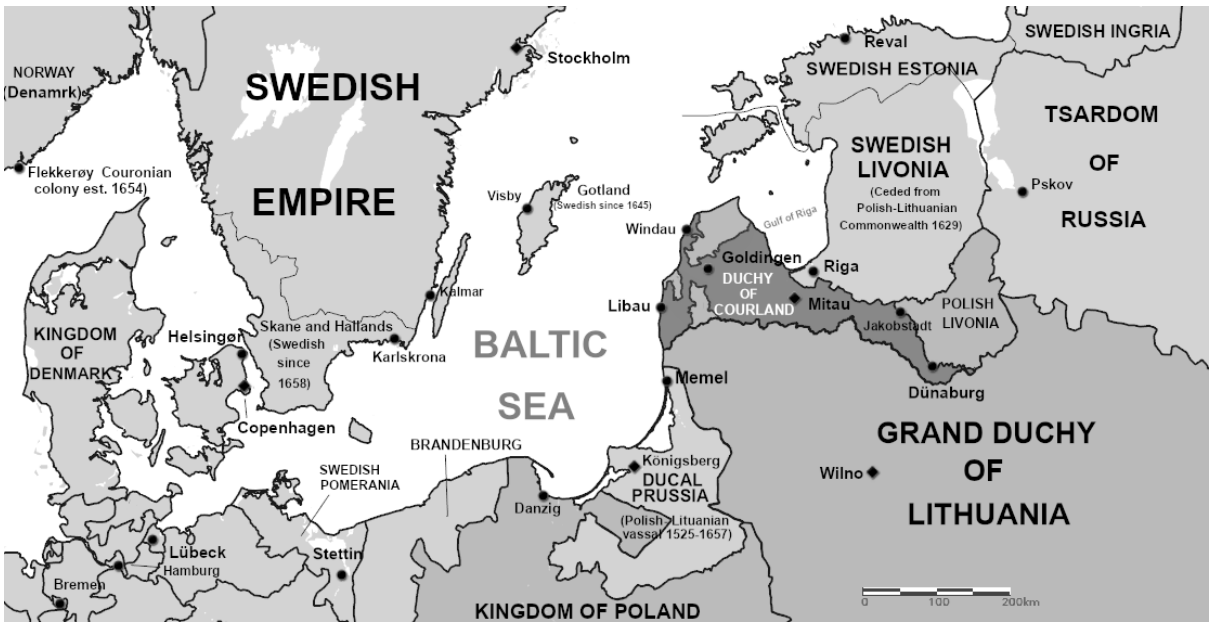


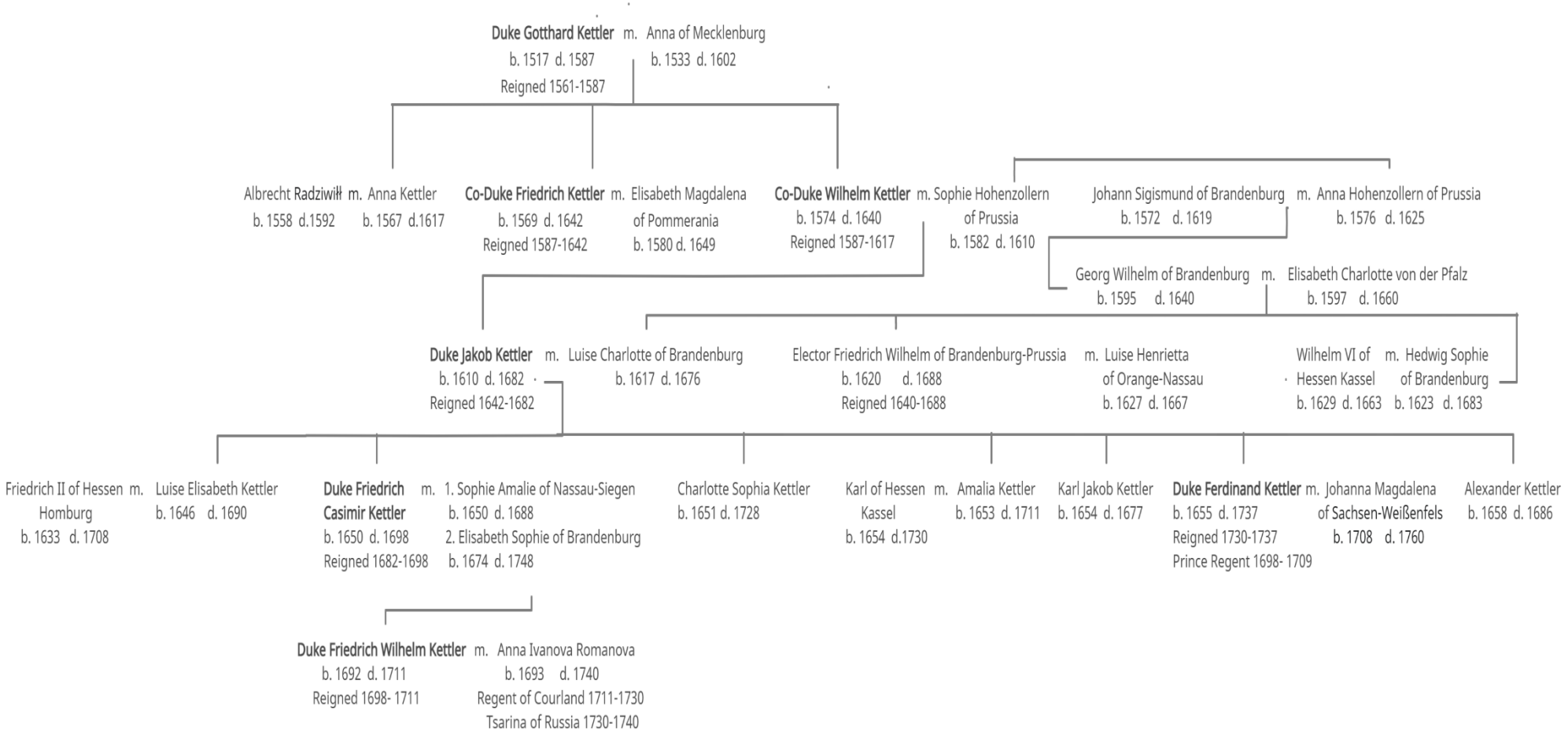
Figure 1: The Duchy of Courland in the mid-seventeenth century.[3]

The colonial period of Courland's history is closely associated with the rule of Duke Jakob (reigned 1642-1682). In contrast to many other colonial and trade enterprises of the seventeenth century, the Couronian experience was not spearheaded by a company but the figure of the duke. Jakob's son Friedrich Casimir (reigned 1682-1698) also pursued colonial interests, but it was the elder Kettler who provided the initial motivation for Couronian expansion. He became intimately involved in the project from finding capital, to instructing when ships should depart and advising on colonial management.

Jakob derived inspiration from the mercantile and commercial practices he had witnessed in England and the United Provinces, during his visit between 1634 and 1637.[4] Once Jakob received a share of ducal responsibility in 1638, he immediately attempted to promote industry on his own lands and increased maritime trading activity. The start of colonialism is subject to some debate. Some sources mark the first Couronian trip to Tobago very early. The 1669 account of Colonel John Scott described

Overleaf: Figure 2: The ducal family tree.

[3] Maps throughout this thesis were created using ArcGIS® software by Esri. ArcGIS® and ArcMap™ are the intellectual property of Esri and are used herein under license. Copyright © Esri. All rights reserved.
[4] Karin Jekabson-Lemanis, 'Balts in the Caribbean: The Duchy of Courland's Attempts to Colonize Tobago Island, 1638 to 1654' in *Caribbean Quarterly* 46: 2 (2000), 25-44 (pp. 31-32).


Duke Gotthard Kettler
b. 1517 d. 1587
Reigned 1561-1587
m. Anna of Mecklenburg
b. 1533 d. 1602
Albrecht Radziwiłł
b. 1558 d.1592
m. Anna Kettler
b. 1567 d.1617
Co-Duke Friedrich Kettler
b. 1569 d. 1642
Reigned 1587-1642
m. Elisabeth Magdalena of Pommerania
b. 1580 d. 1649
Co-Duke Wilhelm Kettler
b. 1574 d. 1640
Reigned 1587-1617
m. Sophie Hohenzollern of Prussia
b. 1582 d. 1610
Johann Sigismund of Brandenburg
b. 1572 d. 1619
m. Anna Hohenzollern of Prussia
b. 1576 d. 1625
Georg Wilhelm of Brandenburg
b. 1595 d. 1640
m. Elisabeth Charlotte von der Pfalz
b. 1597 d. 1660
Duke Jakob Kettler
b. 1610 d. 1682
Reigned 1642-1682
m. Luise Charlotte of Brandenburg
b. 1617 d. 1676
Elector Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg-Prussia
b. 1620 d. 1688
Reigned 1640-1688
m. Luise Henrietta of Orange-Nassau
b. 1627 d. 1667
Wilhelm VI of Hessen Kassel
b. 1629 d. 1663
m. Hedwig Sophie of Brandenburg
b. 1623 d. 1683
Friedrich II of Hessen Homburg
b. 1633 d. 1708
m. Luise Elisabeth Kettler
b. 1646 d. 1690
Duke Friedrich Casimir Kettler
b. 1650 d. 1698
Reigned 1682-1698
m. 1. Sophie Amalie of Nassau-Siegen
b. 1650 d. 1688
2. Elisabeth Sophie of Brandenburg
b. 1674 d. 1748
Charlotte Sophia Kettler
b. 1651 d. 1728
Karl of Hessen Kassel
b. 1654 d.1730
m. Amalia Kettler
b. 1653 d. 1711
Karl Jakob Kettler
b. 1654 d. 1677
Duke Ferdinand Kettler
b. 1655 d. 1737
Reigned 1730-1737
Prince Regent 1698- 1709
m. Johanna Magdalena of Sachsen-Weißenfels
b. 1708 d. 1760
Alexander Kettler
b. 1658 d. 1686
Duke Friedrich Wilhelm Kettler
b. 1692 d. 1711
Reigned 1698- 1711
m. Anna Ivanova Romanova
b. 1693 d. 1740
Regent of Courland 1711-1730
Tsarina of Russia 1730-1740

a Couronian ship arriving in Tobago 'accommodated with Trade to buy it [Tobago] of[f] the Indians' in 1634. The expedition of 212 convicts apparently succeeded in purchasing Tobago but failed to establish a long-term colony.[5] A Couronian voyage in 1634 seems unlikely as Jakob had barely started his tour of Western Europe. Whilst some historians such as Alan Burns, and Cornelis Goslinga have followed Scott's claims, Edgar Anderson has been more inclined to date the first Couronian trip to 1639.[6] The first notion of a Couronian ship arriving in Tobago, available in the ducal archives is 1654.

In Courland itself, the most drastic transformations during Jakob's rule were industrial, most prominently in shipbuilding which grew almost immediately upon Jakob's takeover of governmental duties.[7] Shipbuilding provided a boost to many other industries. Timber, sails, nails, tar, pitch, canons, rope, and other equipment were all produced domestically. It is estimated that over seventy new industrial sites were created during the reign of Duke Jakob in Courland, many of which were in Mitau the ducal capital.[8] In order to expediate production and bring specialist expertise to the duchy, foreigners were encouraged to work in Courland. In 1652, sixteen out of the nineteen carpenters in Windau were of Dutch origin.[9]

The duke also used a network of agents abroad to build prestige and establish trade agreements. In October 1643 a contract was agreed with Denmark to navigate the Danish Sound at a rate of 2% of the cargo's worth. This opened up trade in Western Europe which was furthered by agreements in France in December 1643, and Portugal in February 1648. Courland's association with Portugal allowed a brief period where the duke provided Couronian ships to trade Portuguese goods between Guinea and Brazil on behalf of the Brazilian Company. These journeys were cancelled in late 1652.[10]

The primary points of Couronian colonial interest were St Andreas Island in the River Gambia and Tobago in the Caribbean, where the duke established fortresses. Additional land in Africa was held in Kassan, near modern-day Wassu on the River Gambia, and Bayona, where the Gambian capital, Banjul, stands today (see Figure 3). In addition, there was a short-lived trading outpost at the mouth of

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[5] John Scott, 'Description of Tobago' in *Colonising Expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana 1623-1667 Second* Series No.LVI*,* ed. Vincent Harlow (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1924), 114-119 (pp. 114-115); Jekabson-Lemanis, 'Balts in the Caribbean' (pp. 31-32).

[6] Alan Burns, *History of the British West Indies* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1954), p. 224; Cornelis Ch Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the Wild Coast 1580-1680* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1971), p. 437; Edgar Anderson, 'Die Ersten Kurländischen Expeditionen nach Westindien im 17. Jahrhundert' in *Baltische Hefte* 8:1 (1961), 13-35 (p. 16).

[7] Walter Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus (1561-1682) Ein Beitrag zur Verfassungs-, Verwaltungs-, Finanz- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte Kurlands im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, (Riga: G. Löffler, 1926) p. 136.

[8] Ibid., p. 139.

[9] Ibid.*,* p. 142.

[10] Otto Heinz Mattiesen, *Die Kolonial- und Überseepolitik der Kurländischen Herzöge im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1940), pp. 99-100.

the Sierra Leone from 1654.[11] In Europe, the duke gained a lease to hold iron mines in Norway from 1664 to 1688. Duke Jakob would have added to these colonial possessions had he been successful in his long-standing negotiation with Spain to gain Trinidad, a proposal he put to the Spanish monarchy from 1652 until his death.[12] He also attempted to negotiate with Pope Innocent X to launch a colonial expedition to what Otto Heinz Mattiesen and Anderson believed was Australia. The plans fell apart upon the Pope's death in 1655.[13]

The duchy first established a colonial presence in Africa. The initial three ships arrived on 25 October 1651 carrying the merchant, Willem Mollens, Pieter Schulte a Dutch-Danish governor, and Heinrich Fock, the garrison commander. The group persuaded the Mansa of Barra to lease St Andreas Island so that they could build a fort there. Further land was purchased at Juffure to ensure a water supply.[14] The Couronians traded at local marketplaces, exchanging metal, textiles, salt, and brandy for gold, ivory, pepper, and fruit.[15] Courland also participated in the slave trade along the western coast of Africa, regarded by the duke as an essential component of his ambitions in the Caribbean, both in terms of planting on Tobago and penetrating the trade of other Europeans.



Figure 3: Couronian outposts on the River Gambia and important markets.

[11] Diary of Nicolaes Groenewout, 1653-1655, Latvijas Valsts Vēstures Arhīvs, Riga (hereafter LVVA): 554, apr. 1, l. 850b.
[12] Alexandrs Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland* (Towson, MD: Paul M. Harrod Company, 1969), p. 94; Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, pp. 763-782.
[13] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, pp. 371-376; Andersons, *Senie Kurzemnieki Amerikā*, pp. 106-108.
[14] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 77.
[15] Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*, pp. 175-176 and Andersons, *Senie Kurzemnieki Amerikā*, p. 268.

The Couronian fort on the Gambia suffered from internal discord, revealed in correspondence with Jakob from the fort's pastor, Gottschalk Ebeling. The pastor criticised Schulte heavily, accusing him of embezzlement, selling ducal property, and loyalty to Denmark.[16] The flashpoint came in December 1651, when the English Royalist Prince Ruprecht von der Pfalz arrived on the river chasing English Commonwealth ships. Seemingly, without consultation with his colleagues, Schulte offered to navigate for the new arrivals, aiding Ruprecht in capturing the enemy ships. The incident gained the favour of Ruprecht who sent Duke Jakob advice on where to mine gold in the area, but besmirched Schulte who Jakob dismissed upon his return from Africa in Spring 1652.[17]

Unfortunately for Jakob, Schulte was not the last untrustworthy commander. In September 1652, Jacob du Moulin became the new governor and was instructed to recruit Danish and Norwegian labourers for digging gold. However, du Moulin had accumulated debts and a bad reputation in Denmark. The Copenhagen authorities detained him and his expedition of three Couronian ships, demanding that he return the workers he intended to hire. In November 1652, du Moulin's lieutenant, Friedrich Wilhelm Trotta von Treiden, complained to the duke that his men had not received their salary from the expedition leader who was often drunk by midday. On 10 January 1653, he filed a formal request for him to be removed.[18] In March, the expedition finally reached Norway but lacked money for supplies. The crew of the *Krokodil* mutinied the next month and returned to Windau.[19]

Jakob had little luck with his next choice of governor, the Lieutenant-Colonel Philip von Seitz. In April 1654 he sailed with four ships for Gambia but proved himself little different from his predecessor as the long-suffering von Treiden once again found himself complaining about his master's embezzlement. Von Seitz eventually fled his position at Hamburg. After a period of upheaval, the appointment of Otto Stiel as governor in 1655 calmed the situation in Africa and trade flourished until the fortress was eventually lost in 1661.

The first Couronian voyage to Tobago for which we have evidence landed on 20 May 1654, after the duke negotiated the transfer of the Earl of Warwick's English charter over the island. Colonists sailing under Willem Mollens embarked at what is now known as Great Courland Bay, building both a fort and a town. The colony initially established generally cordial trade relations with local Amerindians, despite the murder of members of the Couronian party in raids.[20] Mollens discovered five Amerindian villages and no Europeans, but that situation was soon to change. In September 1654, Pieter

[16] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik,* pp. 137-8.
[17] Ibid., p. 134 and 136.
[18] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*., pp. 81-82; John Milner Gray, *A History of the Gambia* (London: Frank & Cass, 1966), p. 43.
[19] Gray, *A History of the Gambia*, p. 44.
[20] Arie Boomert, 'Amerindian-European Encounters on and around Tobago (1498-ca.1810)' in *Anthropologica* 97-98 (2002), 71-202 (p. 81).

Becquard, a representative of the wealthy merchant brothers, Adriaan and Cornelius Lampsins from Vlissingen, landed on the windward coast of the island, founding Lampsinsstad (see Figure 4). Upon the discovery of each other there was a brief skirmish which ended in Becquard agreeing to accept the supremacy of the Duke of Courland. However, as more migrants came to the Dutch colony, the enthusiasm to follow this pledge disappeared.

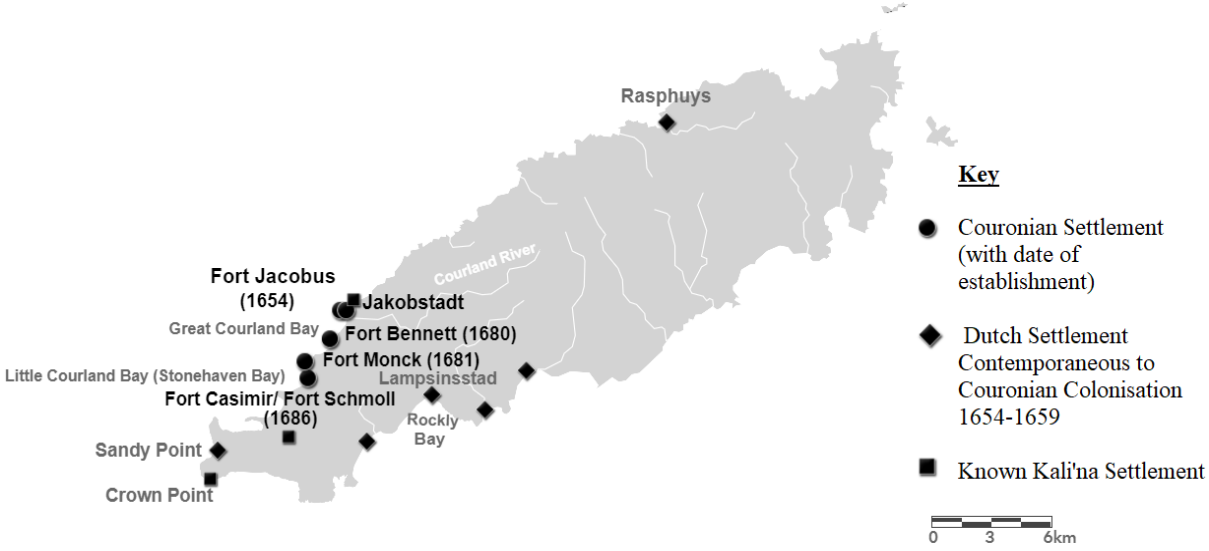


Figure 4: Couronian, Dutch, and Amerindian settlement on Tobago

After trading tobacco, ginger, pepper, and sugar steadily for four years, the situation completely changed in October 1658, when the Polish-Swedish War (1655-1660) dramatically came to Courland. Having asserted neutrality in Sweden, Poland-Lithuania, and Muscovy, Jakob was surprised by a Swedish invasion of Mitau by General Robert Douglas, in which the duke and his family were captured and removed from Courland entirely. King Karl X Gustav of Sweden had become dissatisfied that the duke would not submit as Sweden's vassal and suspected that Duchess Luise Charlotte had influenced the decision of her brother, Elector Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg-Prussia, to ally with Poland-Lithuania in November 1657. His decision was ruinous for Courland. By the time Jakob was released after the Peace of Oliva in April 1660, Courland was reeling from war damages estimated at the time to be worth 6,500,000 reichsthaler.[21]

[21] Karl Johann von Blomberg, *An Account of Livonia : with a Relation of the Rise, Progress, and Decay of the Marian Teutonick Order: the Several Revolutions that have Happen'd there to these Present Times, with the Wars of Poland, Sweden and Muscovy, Contending for that Province : a Particular Account of the Dukedoms of Courland, Semigallia, and the Province of Pilten: to Which is Added the Author's Journey from Livonia to Holland in 1698 ... Sent in Letters to his Friend in London* (London: Peter Buck, 1701), p. 224.

The war destabilised Courland's previously impressive expansion. Maritime trade and industry faltered, never recovering to pre-war levels during the seventeenth century. The duke also lost his colonies. The Amsterdam chamber of the Dutch West India Company (hereafter WIC) saw the absence of Jakob as an opportunity to assert its presence in Western Africa, an area which the company delegated to the Groningen chamber. On 4 February 1659 it persuaded Jakob's Amsterdam factor, Hendrik Momber to allow it to control St Andreas Island until Jakob's release. The agreement met with resistance from Otto Stiel but he was overruled by his garrison, leading to the transfer of the island to the Amsterdam chamber and Stiel's transportation to Amsterdam.

Amsterdam's hold on the former ducal fortress was insecure. In 1660 a French ship under Swedish employ dislodged the new garrison. Stiel, with support from the WIC's Groningen chamber, resettled the island in April 1660, but was forced to surrender by the return of the Amsterdam chamber. However, they were to be expelled again, this time by a force sent by the Mansa of Barra who ambushed them in Juffure, perceiving the transfer of power as a slight against him.[22] Stiel returned on 2 August to find the fort partially destroyed by the departing Dutch. By this time, Duke Jakob had been released by his Swedish captors, yet domestic ruin left him in no position to support his African trading post. Disease dwindled the Couronian garrison to a population of seven by March 1661. It was at this point that Robert Holmes of the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading in Africa arrived with a charter from King Charles II of England and demanded that Stiel give up his island, which he eventually did.[23]

The Couronian colony on Tobago also suffered from discontent. On 11 November 1659, the garrison mutinied with prompting from the Dutch.[24] The temporary governor, Wolfert van Brederode van Cloeteringe, fled and Willem Mollens, en route with African slaves, diverted course to Jamaica. On 27 February 1660, Governor Huijbert de Beveren of the Lampsins' colony paid the mutineers 500 reichsthalers for the fort in return for safe passage to Europe. The Dutchman claimed that the duke would be granted the colony back upon the repayment of the 500 reichsthalers. In practice this did not happen; when Momber attempted to contact Cornelius Lampsins about the matter in May 1664, he was told that the Dutch had had the rights for Tobago since Jan de Moor's short-lived colony of 1628.[25]

In September 1661, Jakob entered negotiation in both England and the United Provinces to retake his colonies. On 6 May 1662, Jakob received assurances from the States General that all Dutch claims would be removed from St Andreas Island. Restitution of Tobago was denied. In London a

[22] Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*, p. 187.
[23] Gray, *A History of the Gambia*, p. 60.
[24] Andersons, *Senie Kurzemnieki Amerikā*, p. 271 and Douglas Archibald, *Tobago, "Melancholy Isle"* (Port-of-Spain: Westindiana, 1987), p. 30.
[25] Archibald, *Tobago*, pp. 30-31.

breakthrough was finally made in 1664 when Jakob signed a treaty with Charles II, granting Courland rights over Tobago but allowing the Royal Adventurers ownership of St Andreas, which had been renamed James Island. The deal allowed Couronian ships trade worth £12,000 per year on the Gambia with customs dues of 3%. Additionally, Courland was to loan England a fully fitted man-of-war should England come into conflict with any power apart from Poland-Lithuania.

The agreement did not end the saga. The Royal Adventurers refused to acknowledge Couronian rights in the River Gambia and, by the end of the Second Anglo-Dutch War in 1667, the royal appetite to uphold the deal had fallen away. A royal investigation took place in 1673 but changed very little as Couronian ships were turned away in 1677 and 1679. In December 1680, English officials offered Jakob the Caribbean island of St Lucia as compensation but he rejected it as being too costly. The last Couronian attempts to trade in the Gambia occurred during the reign of Duke Friedrich Casimir who sent ships without success in 1682, 1684, and 1690.

From 1668, Jakob attempted to send settlers to Tobago under the authority of the 1664 treaty, despite the fact that England now recognised the island as Dutch after the Treaty of Breda in 1667. Dutch settlers already occupied the old Couronian fort by the time Moritz Carstens' Couronian expedition arrived there.[26] Further expeditions in the 1670s also ended in disappointment, for instance that of the *Möwe* which was captured in Grenada in 1672 by French colonial authorities. The Dutch colony was eventually cleared during the Third Anglo-Dutch War of 1672-1674, allowing Robert Benet to settle a new Couronian colony at Stone Haven Bay in 1680. However, the settlers were attacked by Amerindians and Benet fled along with many other colonists. A further voyage conducted by Franz Monck arrived in 1681 to find a depleted colony and so he built his own fort on the western coast of the island.

In Courland, the elderly Duke Jakob finally gave up on his distrust of private enterprise, recruiting John Poyntz to colonise Tobago with English settlers on a 120,000-acre plot of land.[27] The deal, reached in 1681, was the last of Jakob's major interventions concerning Tobago. He died on 1 January 1682. Jakob's ducal successor, Friedrich Casimir did not initially inherit his father's colonial legacy, but his brother Ferdinand's disengagement in managing Tobago, caused the matter to revert to him. Friedrich Casimir did not share in Jakob's meticulous approach. In 1688 he ceded control of Courland's Norwegian mines due to inactivity. However, Friedrich Casimir did further the shipbuilding industry, particularly in Libau. Upon succeeding Jakob, Friedrich Casimir renegotiated the contract with Poyntz, but found that the scheme had few takers and in December 1683 the Council of the King of England prevented Poyntz from continuing.

[26] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 146.
[27] Ibid., p. 155 and 157.

In London Poyntz had reported an idyllic and abundant Tobago.[28] This description was far removed from Monck's experience. An antagonistic policy towards the nearby Amerindians and the harsh tropical climate saw the colony ravaged by attacks and disease. Monck eventually left Tobago in 1683. In November 1685, the duke sent Barthold Otto Schmoll on the *Fortuna* to rebuild Monck's fort. In June 1686 he arrived in Tobago with sixty soldiers but, contrary to instructions, attempted to build a new fort from scratch. The plan was highly problematic as it was not finished by the time Amerindian attacks and the rainy season came. By January 1687, one third of the soldiers were dead.[29] Schmoll fled to Barbados but was blown to Jamaica in a storm. Here a destitute Schmoll sold some of his weaker soldiers into slavery. Afterwards, he mortgaged the *Fortuna* in Boston, Massachusetts before returning to Courland in 1688 where the duke had him executed.[30]

Further expeditions were no less disastrous. In May 1687, Wybrant Starb arrived in Tobago and found no one there. After three weeks his party simply left and returned to the Baltic. In October 1687, Tobago's new governor, the elderly Dietrich von Altenbockum, died in a shipwreck en route to the Caribbean. The colony then fell to Abraham Marin, a former envoy to England. Marin was quick to sail to Barbados where he attempted to negotiate with Governor Edwyn Stede, on the basis that Charles II had instructed Barbados to aid any Couronian colony on Tobago in 1681. Stede was reluctant to give the Couronian settlers more than short-term supplies as he believed any further help would breach the English Navigation Acts which dictated that only English ships could carry English colonial trade. Marin eventually died in Boston on 13 March 1689. Meanwhile, the situation on Tobago deteriorated. On 7 September 1688, the island reported that most colonists had either died or deserted and that the remnants were coming under increasing pressure from Amerindian attacks.[31]

The last Couronian journey to Tobago was made by a group of seventy workers who hoped to provide lumber for Barbados. The group arrived in 1689 and was mentioned by the English traveler Hans Sloane.[32] On 17 May 1690, Friedrich Casimir sent a letter to Tobago, informing the colony that he had appointed a new governor, Adolph Esmit, but Esmit never arrived as the duke had, by then, run out of money. On 14 March 1691 the duke arrived at a deal to sell half the island to Brandenburg for 40,000 reichsthaler in an attempt to establish a joint colony. Even this plan collapsed as Brandenburg were unwilling to act without English consent, which was not given.[33] The English were also reluctant to endorse an aborted plan from 1699 for Ferdinand Kettler, who became the prince regent after

[28] John Poyntz, *The Present Prospect of the Famous and Fertile Island of Tobago with a Description of the Situation, Growth, Fertility and Manufacture of the Said Island, to which is Added Proposals for the Encouragement of All Those that are Minded to Settle There* (London: George Larkin, 1683).
[29] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 178.
[30] Albrecht von Treskow, 'Kapitän Otto Barthold Schmoll' in *Altpreußische Monatsschrift* 55 (1918), 61-77.
[31] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 182.
[32] Ibid, p.183.
[33] Ibid., pp. 183-184.

Friedrich Casimir's death in 1698, to sponsor a colony run by merchants from Rotterdam.[34] The last mention of Couronians in Tobago is a description from the Danish sailor, David Jansten, who found the lumber workers stacking up wood in anticipation of more Couronian ships in 1693.[35] Although the role of Governor of Tobago was maintained in Courland until 1711, no Couronian ships would ever arrive to collect the timber.

The Couronian Colonialism in Historiography

The case study of Courland's colonialism has not enjoyed extensive coverage, particularly since the Second World War. The last book dedicated to it was released in 1970 by Edgar Anderson but is inaccessible to most scholars as it was written in Latvian.[36] Since then the field has consisted of valuable but rare articles.[37] Pre-war studies of Courland are more abundant but also benefit from a broader source base, as much of the archival material has been heavily disrupted. For example, much of the ducal archive was destroyed in Berlin when the building housing it was bombed during World War Two.[38] Studies such as Mattiesen's article on Schulte's logbook are invaluable because that source simply does not exist anymore.[39] This disruption, along with Courland's relative periphery in both colonial and European affairs, are just two explanations as to why this topic has not enjoyed abundant study.

The source situation causes later literature to be dependent on older works like Heinrich Diederichs' '*Herzog Jacob von Kurlands Kolonien an der Westküste von Afrika'* or Mattiesen's '*Die Kolonial- und Überseepolitik der Herzöge im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert'*, despite their somewhat old-fashioned theoretical scope.[40] The first historians to write about Couronian colonialism were Baltic German

[34] J. van Heerwaarden, 'Tobago, Koerland en Rotterdam: Mooie Plannen voor een Avontuurlijke Onderneming (1699)' in *Rotterdamsch Jaarboekje* 9:8 (1990), 190-229; W.R. Menkman, 'Stukken Betrekkelijk het Eiland Tabago 1664- 1684- 1698' in *Rotterdamsch Jaarboekje* (1939), 80-93.
[35] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 184.
[36] Andersons, *Senie Kurzemnieki Amerikā.*
[37] For example, Jekabson-Lemanis, 'Balts in the Caribbean'; Mārīte Jakovļeva, 'Jauns Avots Kurzemes Hercogistes Koloniālās Politikas Izpētei: Hercoga Jēkaba Rīkojums Ekspedīcijas Vadītājiem uz Tobago, 1670. Gads' in *Latvijas Arhīvi* 3 (2018), 27-58; Imbi Sooman, Stefan Donecker, Jesma McFarlane and Valdis Tēraudkalns, 'From the Port of Ventspils to Great Courland Bay: The Couronian Colony on Tobago in Past and Present' in *Journal of Baltic Studies* 44:4 (2013), 503-525; Mariusz Balcerek, *[Former Courlandian fortifications on St. Andrew's Island (James Island, Kunta Kinteh Island) in the Gambia in the 18th century] Dawne Kurlandzkie Fortyfikacje na Wyspie św. Andrzeja w Gambii w XVIII w.*, (2019) *https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335920766_Former_Courlandian_fortifications_on_St_Andrew's_Island_James_Island_Kunta_Kinteh_Island_in_the_Gambia_in_the_18th_century_Dawne_kurlandzkie_fortyfikacje_na_Wyspie_sw_Andrzeja_w_Gambii_w_XVIII_w* [Accessed 12 February 2021].
[38] Beata Krajewska and Theodros Zeids, 'Zwei kurländische Archive und ihre Schicksale' in *Das Herzogtum Kurland 1561-1795: Verfassung, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft,* eds. Erwin Oberländer and Ilgvars Misāns (Lüneburg: Verlag Nordeutsches Kulturwerk, 1993), 13-28.
[39] Heinz Mattiesen, 'Ein Tagebuch aus Gambia 1651/52' in *Baltische Monatshefte* 4 (1935), 189-211.
[40] H. Diedrichs, *Herzog Jacob von Kurlands Kolonien an der Westküste von Afrika* (Mitau: J.F. Steffenhagen und Sohn, 1890); Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*.

scholars who published from the nineteenth century until the Second World War. Latvian historians such as Stepermanis in the 1930s, also took an interest in Courland's history from a nationalistic point of view, describing the rule of Duke Jakob as a golden-age in Latvian history.[41] However, it was the German-speaking historians who were more widely published. The writers from the nineteenth century, for instance Karl Wilhelm Cruse, August Seraphim, and Alexander von Richter often approached the subject geopolitically, highlighting the duchy's precarious place in Eastern European. All emphasised and demonised Sweden's perceived betrayal of Courland's neutrality which instigated the collapse of Courland's colonies.[42] The economic aspect of Couronian expansion became more prominent in twentieth century works such as Walter Eckert's extensive 1926 study into what he saw as a mercantilist state.[43]

The work of Germanic historians culminated in Mattiesen's comprehensive work of 1940.[44] The book is a rich resource for the study of Couronian colonialism and is to be found in the footnotes of most subsequent publications. Mattiesen's work does come with a caveat, which is that he was writing in Nazi Germany. In this context, his emphasis seems rather dubious. Mattiesen regarded Courland as a part of 'Germanity' and highlighted the leading role of Baltic Germans in industrial growth, politics, and culture, simultaneously diminishing any Latvian contribution to the political economy, and incorporating Courland into a wider German identity. 'Seen from the viewpoint of our German *Volk,'* Mattiesen wrote, '[…] those overseas conquests of a German Duke […] were in fact the first real German colonies in the world!'[45] Mattiesen emphasised a German expansionist tradition, remarking, '[t]he most profound basis for all life, all politics of the state entity 'Courland' is Germanity. The German nation was the leading power in the first phase of internal European colonial history in the Middle Ages.'[46] Whilst recent scholars of the Baltic crusades have sought to distance themselves from the notion that the Teutonic Order promulgated modern conceptions of Germany and

[41] Sooman et al., 'From the Port of Ventspils', (p. 516); M. Stepermanis, 'Hercogs Jēkabs - Kurzemes Saimnieks', in *Gulbenes Balss* 11 (1939), *https://periodika.lndb.lv/periodika2-viewer/view/index-dev.html?lang=fr#panel:pa|issue:/p_001_guba1939n11|article:DIVL194|issueType:P* [Accessed 15 August 2019], pp. 5-6.

[42] Karl Wilhelm Cruse, *Curland unter den Herzögen: Erster Band* (Mitau: Verlag von G.U. Reyher, 1833), August Seraphim, 'II. Abteilung Kurland unter den Herzögen' in *Geschichte Liv-, Est- und Kurlands von der, Aufsegelung des Lands bis zur Einverleibung in das Russische Reich: Ein Populäre Darstellung*, ed. Ernst Seraphim (Reval: Franz Kluge, 1896), 429-677 and Alexander von Richter, *Geschichte der Russischen Kaiserthum Einveleibten Deutschen Ostseeprovinzen bis zur Zeit ihrer Vereinigung mit Demselben Theil II Die Ostseelande als Provinzen Fremdes Reiches 1562-1721* (Riga: Nicolai Kymmel's Buchhandlung, 1858).

[43] Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*.

[44] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*.

[45] 'Deutschtum' and 'Vom Standpunkte unseres deutschen Volk aber aus gesehen verdienen jene Tats am allermeisten eingehende Beachtung und Anerkennung: waren doch jene überseeischen Eroberungen des deutschen […] Herzogs […] die ersten wirklich deutsche Kolonien in der Welt!' Ibid., p. 1.

[46] 'Der tiefste Urgrund alles Lebens, aller Politik des Staatsgebildes „Kurland" ist das Deutschtum. Die deutsche Nation war führende Macht in der ersten mittelalterlichen Stufe der innereuropäischen Kolonialgeschichte'. Ibid., p. 2.

colonialism, Mattiesen's placement of '*Deutschtum*' at the centre of Baltic life chimed with the age in which he wrote.[47] His emphasis on the personal control of Duke Jakob and his rejection of Polish liberal politics, mirrored the national socialist preference for a strong leader and its dismissal of Poland as a state.

Mattiesen's work is a product of its time, however, this is not to say that Mattiesen lacked insight. Courland was indeed a duchy ruled by a Germanic elite with Latvians contributing to the Kettlers' Atlantic colonialism in only very subtle ways, such as ship construction. Later scholars, such as Bernd Längin and Ulrich van der Heyden, have connected Courland to the broader narrative of German overseas colonisation, pointing to the close dynastic ties between the Kettlers of Courland and the Hohenzollerns of Brandenburg-Prussia, who colonised only three decades after the Courlanders.[48] Finally, there is merit to the argument that the dukes and Couronian merchants did not benefit from a Polish-Lithuanian system orientated towards the nobility. Mattiesen should not be dismissed because of his context which serves to sour his comments on expansion, ethnicity, and power. Indeed, Mattiesen is praised by Oleg Yevstratyev as the historian who scrutinised the available sources most effectively.[49]

Studies conducted during the Cold War period were most prominently written by Latvian emigres to America, Edgar Anderson and Aleksandrs Berķis. Despite the political strains of the time, Anderson and Berķis were able to access archival evidence kept behind the Iron Curtain. However, Anderson also sought to investigate archives outside Eastern Europe, thus providing a broad view of how Couronian activities were perceived by those who encountered them.[50] Anderson and Berķis, were both very positive about Courland's successes. Anderson wrote extensively of the good relations Couronian colonists strove for when interacting with indigenous peoples whilst also alluding to what he saw as the democratic structure of Couronian colonial society.[51] Berķis emphasised the lucrativeness of the colonies as well as the beneficial role the duke played in developing productivity within Courland.[52] The two Latvian emigres highlighted the role of Latvians, speaking not only of the participation of Latvians as colonists and industrial workers, but also of what they saw as a friendly

[47] For example, Hartmut Boockmann, *Der Deutsche Orden: Zwölf Kapitel aus seiner Geschichte* (München: Beck, 1981).
[48] Bernd G. Längin, *Die Deutschen Kolonien: Schauplätze und Schicksale 1884-1918* (Hamburg: Mittler, 2004) pp. 16-17; Ulrich van der Heyden, *Rote Adler an Afrikas Küste: die Brandenburgisch-preußische Kolonie Großfriedrichsburg an der Westafrikanischen Küste* (Berlin: Brandenburgisches Verlaghaus, 1993), p. 22.
[49] Oleg Yevstratyev, 'Chronological Dating of the Duchy of Courland's Colonial Policy' in *Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls* 108:3 (2018), 34-72.
[50] Aleksandrs Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland (1561-1795)*(Towson, MD: The Paul M. Harrod Company, 1969); Edgar Anderson, 'The Couronians and the West Indies: The First Settlements' in *Caribbean Quarterly* 5:4 (1959), 264-272; Andersons, *Senie Kurzemnieki Amerikā*.
[51] Anderson, 'The Couronians and the West Indies', (p. 271).
[52] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland.*

ducal policy towards Latvians which provided them with increased mobility.[53] Anderson and Berķis' positive view was not shared by all post-war Latvian historians. Alfreds Bilmanis, writing from Princeton in the 1950s, described Jakob's colonial plans as leading 'the young Duchy unnecessarily into troubled waters'.[54]

The fall of the Iron Curtain and the release of the ducal archive to a broader scholarly audience has not inspired a vast upsurge in Couronian colonial study. Those who do study the duchy, for example Erwin Oberländer, Markus Lux, and Mārīte Jakovļeva, are more inclined to view it from the perspective of Baltic trade and industry, rather than the Atlantic trade.[55] Constitutional matters are also popular; Oberländer, Volker Keller, and Almut Bues have all written on their shaping of Courland's struggles for greater status and political freedom.[56] In her work Bues often emphasises the role of industriousness and compromise in small-power politics, themes that resonate in the colonial context.[57] Such non-colonial works are important to provide background to the study of Couronian expansion but contrast with nineteenth and early twentieth century historians, such as Cruse, Seraphim, and von Richter who were all keen to mention colonialism as the key and most impressive characteristic of Courland.[58] Conversely, the modern scholarship brings a scepticism to the topic of colonialism which questions whether it was an overstretch, or indeed whether it had that much effect on the fortunes of the duchy itself.[59]

Publications which deal with Couronian colonialism directly are rare. Often the subject is mentioned only in wider studies concerning Courland, Latvia, Western Africa, or the Caribbean. For instance, analysis of Courland's colonies is included in Berķis' study of the Duchy of Courland, John Milner Gray's book on The Gambia, and Goslinga's investigation of the Dutch in the Caribbean.[60] Works that do not deal with Courland directly are sometimes hampered by a lack of detailed knowledge about Courland's European situation. Some studies mark Couronian settlements in Latvian instead of

[53] Ibid., pp. 58-60 and Andersons, 'The Couronians and the West Indies', (p. 269).
[54] Alfreds Bilmanis, *A History of Latvia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1951), p. 190.
[55] Markus Lux, 'Ein „Kurländisches Genua"? Der Handelsplatz Libau unter der Kettler-Herzögen in *Das Herzogtum Kurland: 1561 - 1795; Verfassung, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft.* Vol. 2, eds. Erwin Oberländer and Nordostdeutsches Kulturwerk (Lüneberg: Verlag Nordostdeutsche Kulturwerk, 2001), 147-196; Mārīte Jakovļeva, 'Merkantilismus und Manufakturen: Die Eisenwerke der Herzöge von Kurland' in, *Das Herzogtum Kurland*, eds. Oberländer and Misāns, 99-128.
[56] Erwin Oberländer and Volker Keller (eds.), *Kurland: vom Polnisch-litauischen Lehnsherzogtum zur Russischen Provinz: Dokumente zur Verfassungsgeschichte 1561-1795* (Paderborn: F. Schönigh, 2008).
[57] Almut Bues, *Das Herzogtum Kurland und der Norden der Polnish-litauischen Adelsrepublik im 16. Und 17. Jahrhundert: Möglichkeiten von Integration und Autonomie* (Giessen: Verlag Litblockin, 2001).
[58] Cruse, *Curland unter den Herzögen*; Seraphim, 'II. Abteilung Kurland unter den Herzögen'; von Richter, *Geschichte der Russischen Kaiserthum*.
[59] Volker Keller, 'Das Herzogtum Kurland im 16. Und 17. Jahrhundert' in, *Kurland*, eds. Oberländer and Keller, 17-28; Mārīte Jakovļeva, 'Mythos und Realität: Zur Flotte und zum Schiffbau im Herzogtum Kurland' in *Forschungen zur Baltischen Geschichte* 8 (2013), 81-102.
[60] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*; Gray*, A History of the Gambia*; Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean*.

German, an anachronism based on modern-day circumstances.[61] Another example is Norman Davies' work on Poland '*God's Playground*' which expresses ignorance of Courland's geography, claiming that Semigallia was owned directly by Poland, whilst also assuming that Windau and Ventspils are two different places.[62] Dedicated studies to Couronian colonialism are not free of misinformation and suppositions either. Oleg Yevstratyev's important study of historian's often uncritical view of unreliable sources, has uncovered doubtful information regarding chronology in Anderson, Eckert, and Jekabson-Lemanis' work, among many others.[63]

Yevstratyev is among a very small number of contemporary scholars of Couronian colonialism, which perhaps only includes Jakovļeva. Both question previous historiography which they claim has been glorified. Yevstratyev, in particular, has opposed what he sees as a nationalist hijacking of the Couronian past which has recast Tobago and Gambia as colonies of Latvia, Poland, Lithuania, and Belarus.[64] His analysis of Courland highlights exaggerations in previous scholarship, for instance the early start to Tobagonian settlement or the influence of James I of England, which has been used to promote Courland's prestige unduly.[65] Jakovļeva has also engaged in some watering down of the more hyperbolic claims of colonial historiography. For example, she has questioned ducal capacity to produce large warships, as well as the narrative of Jakob's enlightened rule.[66] An additional historian who has written on Couronian colonial strategy is Kord Henning Uber who has perceived the subject from a religious perspective following on from Ernst Dammann's 1967 work on Lutheran missionaries in Courland's African outposts. Uber's work compares Couronian religious toleration in domestic and colonial settings.[67]

[61] Two culprits, despite their good studies include, Jekabson-Lemanis, 'Balts in the Caribbean'; Boomert, 'Amerindian- European Encounters', (p.126).
[62] Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland* (Oxford: New York: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 343. Davies describes Windau as Windawa- the Polish translation of Windau-and the Bishopric of Pilten as Ventspils- the Latvian translation of Windau.
[63] Yevstratyev, 'Chronological Dating'.
[64] Ibid., p. 34; Polish works that voice this opinion of Polish ownership include Mateusz Będkowski, 'Nowa Kurlandia, czyli Sny o Koloniach Lennika Rzeczypospolitej' in *Tytus* (19 June 2019), *https://tytus.edu.pl/2019/06/17/nowa-kurlandia-czyli-sny-o-imperium-kolonialnym-lennika-rzeczypospolitej/* [Accessed 13 August 2019]; Tomasz Cukiernik, 'Kolonialna Kurlandia' in *Stańczyk Królewski* 1 (2008), *http://tomaszcukiernik.pl/artykuly/artykuly-historyczne/kolonialna-kurlandia/* [Accessed 4 May 2019]; Antoni Olbrychski, 'Polskie Kolonie, czyli Zamorskie Kresy Rzeczpospolitej' on *Histmag.org* (20 May 2014), *https://histmag.org/Polskie-kolonie-czyli-zamorskie-kresy-Rzeczpospolitej-9488* [Accessed 25 February 2020]; Arpad Kowalski, *Kolonie Rzeczypospolitej* (Warszawa: Bellona, 2005).
[65] Yevstratyev, 'Chronological Dating'.
[66] Jakovļeva, 'Mythos und Realität'; Jakovļeva, 'Jauns Avots'.
[67] Kord Henning Uber, 'Die Religionspolitik Herzog Jakobs von Kurland unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung ihrer Bedeutung für die Herzoglichen Kolonialunternehmungen' in *Studia Maritima* 15 (2012), 181-198; Ernst Dammann, 'Die Ersten Lutherischen Geistlichen in Afrika (Gambia)' in *Glaube, Geist, Geschichte,* ed. Ernst Benz (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967), 525-531.

Many of those who have written about Couronian colonialism in recent years have been students writing their theses. Amanda Sumner brings archaeological considerations to the field in her attempt to find Fort Jacobus on Tobago, whilst Harry Merritt wrote from the perspective of national memory concerning the Latvian narrative about Tobago. Stefan Noack has produced work on the importance of foreign prestige for Courland as well as raising important criticisms of the post-colonial deficiencies in previous historical studies.[68] Karin Jekabson-Lemanis commented on the possible demographic constitution of the colonies. Her work has sought to analyse primary source material, predominantly derived from Anderson's previous study, in order to place the Couronian expeditions within the context of past European encounters with Tobago and the Amerindian presence there. Jekabson-Lemanis also attempted to add to the debate about how many Latvians were present in Tobago.[69]

Themes and Aims of the Thesis

As an addition to this previous scholarship, this thesis aims to bring new perspectives on a long-neglected topic in colonial and Atlantic history. It will question several themes that have been present in past readings, namely the fixation upon Duke Jakob and the absence of scholarship which places indigenous interactions within their proper context. The thesis recognises that Jakob was ultimately only one part of Courland's colonial structure, which consisted of a network stretching across differing environments and spaces. The focus upon various components of the Couronian network serves to uncover the range of motivations, perspectives, and inspirations behind the desire to expand in both European and extra-European environments. Considerations of how colonial ideas and contexts traversed between alternative spaces is a key part of this study in its attempts to determine what of Courland's Atlantic interactions can be linked to the situation in the domestic Baltic.

There is a great tendency for the historiography to place Duke Jakob at the very centre of Couronian networks of expansion. The primacy of the duke in the motivation of Couronian colonial ambitions, is very clear when one observes the colonial structure which facilitated ducal input at a very detailed level. The unusual phenomenon of a single figure inspiring Atlantic colonialism from what Immanuel Wallerstein would term as a global periphery or, at best, a semi-periphery, has led to narratives of exceptionalism, particularly in nationally minded histories.[70] Many historiographical narratives have

[68]Amanda Sumner, *New Courland, Tobago: A GIS Analysis of a 17th Century Settlement*, undergraduate thesis, University of Central Florida (2018), https://stars.library.ucf.edu/honorstheses/313 [Accessed 20 October 2018]; Harry Merritt, 'The Colony of the Colonized: the Duchy of Courland's Tobago Colony and Contemporary Latvian identity' in *Nationalities Papers* 38:4 (2010), 491-508; Stefan Noack, *Der Traum des Herzogs: Kurlands Kolonie auf Tobago* (Berlin: GRIN Verlag, 2009); Stefan Noack, *Der Alptraum der Indigenen?: Kurlands Kolonie auf Tobago* (Berlin: GRIN Verlag, 2011).

[69] Jekabson-Lemanis, 'Balts in the Caribbean'.

[70] Discussion of Courland and peripheries in Almut Bues, 'Taktieren im „Machtleeren Raum" Die Politik Herzog Jakobs von Kurland' in *Prusy i Inflanty między Średniowieczem a Nowożytnością: Państwo, Społeczeństwo,*

used Jakob to characterise the entire process of Courland's colonialism, verging sometimes on the hagiographical. Jakob's reign has been described as a 'golden-age' for both Couronian and Latvian history. Some narratives portray him as an enlightened ruler who opposed an antiquated nobility to pursue capitalist business, greater independence, and a freer Latvian peasantry.[71] More sober responses have nevertheless recognised Jakob as remarkable. Scholars have acknowledged Jakob as the only Couronian ruler who managed to assert a significant amount of independence.[72] According to Uber, Eckert, and Kahk and Tarvel, economic development helped Jakob to detach his fortunes from a conservative political atmosphere.[73]

Given that Jakob was so active in pursuing his own economic and colonial ideas, the framing of the Couronian approach has often revolved around Jakob's own particular ideals and experiences. Jakob's visit to the trading centres of Western Europe has been used to highlight him as a westerniser, thus linking him to a historical process including the rules of Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg-Prussia and Peter I of Russia, who also undertook the same journey. The effect of Jakob's individual encounters has been highlighted to show the connections Jakob cultivated in order to pursue business and commercial opportunities, but also so-called 'western' ideas. At the head of these new ideas stands mercantilism, a broad set of economic principles which involved the state supporting industrialisation to increase the balance of exports over imports. It also includes the expansion of state power, an attempt at urbanisation, and the development of a middle class.[74] Bilmanis went as far as to claim that Jakob's education in the West led to his desire to 'Europeanise' Courland so it could participate as a connected, commercial, and continental early modern polity. Oberländer described this view of an early modern polity as purely western European.[75]

Kultura: Zbiór Studiów, eds. Bogusław Dybaś and Mariusz Makiłła (Toruń: Wydawn. Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2003), 201-207 based on Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System. II, Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-economy, 1600-1750* (New York: Academic Press, 1980).

[71] This characterisation is discussed in Sooman et al., 'From the Port of Ventspils'; Merritt, 'The Colony of the Colonized'. It is shown to some extent in Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland* and Bilmanis, *A History of Latvia* amongst others.

[72] Bues, *Das Herzogtum Kurland*; W.R. Menkman, 'Tobago: Een Bijdrage tot de Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Kolonisatie in Tropisch Amerika II', *De West-Indische Gids* 21 (1939), 305-314.

[73] Kord Henning Uber, 'The Duchy of Courland from 1650 to 1737: Transformation of a Religious Borderland in the Baltic Sea Region', in *Globalizing Borderlands Studies in Europe and North America,* eds. John W.I. Lee and Michael North (Lincoln; University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 155-178 (p. 170); Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*, p. 19 and 132; Juhan Kahk and Enn Tarvel, *An Economic History of the Baltic Countries* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1991), p. 58.

[74] Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*, p. 47; Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland,* pp. 41-43.

[75] Bilmanis, *A History of Latvia*, p. 191; Erwin Oberländer, 'Das Konzept der Frühen Neuzeit und die Geschichte Estlands, Livlands und Kurlands 1561-1795' in *Die Baltischen Länder und Europa in der Frühen Neuzeit,* eds. Norbert Angermann, Karsten Brüggemann and Inna Põltsam- Jürjo (Köln: Weimar: Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2015), 11-35 (p. 11).

Colonial policy has been connected to supposedly liberal and enlightened attitudes via Jakob. For instance, Uber, Anderson, and Berķis refer to religious toleration, linking back to the duke's *laissez-faire* attitude towards faith in his homeland.[76] In addition, Anderson and Berķis argued that Jakob promoted a policy of emancipation in Tobago connected to his comparatively clement treatment of serfs in his Couronian demesnes.[77] Anderson, Berķis, and Christoph Rella saw this attitude informing the inclusion of Amerindians as free planters in the colony and the apparent 'humane' treatment of slaves. This has allowed a narrative claiming that Courland's brief sojourn into the global colonial space was comparatively liberal amongst contemporaries.[78] Such a conclusion is reminiscent of the lingering narrative which maintained that German practices of colonial participation in the Atlantic were also 'morally superior' following the claims of early modern writers.[79] These overall findings contrast with the opinion of Jürgen Osterhammel, despite his support for the idea of a German moral colonial *Sonderweg*, that governance of colonies often differed from the metropole, using liberalism as a trait which did not extend from Europe to the Americas and Africa.[80]

Mattiesen's assessment was that Jakob's distinctiveness tended towards absolutist control, given that the duke was so keen to handle Courland's colonial affairs personally.[81] Mattiesen, from his perspective in 1930s Central Europe, saw the makings of a 'colonial republic of the most modern form', which to him entailed the strong rule of an enlightened ruler.[82] Like Mattiesen, Yevstratyev picks out the duke's involved style in the management of his colonies, but styles him as a private individual rather than an absolutist leader. Instead of characterising Courland's colonies as republican, absolutist, or mercantilist, Yevstratyev chose the term 'cameralist'. In doing so he emphasises similar processes of centralising economic resources, improving export and using princely power, but in contrast to Mattiesen, saw Jakob as strengthening his personal role as a part of the state rather than becoming it.[83]

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[76] Uber, 'Die Religionspolitik Herzog Jakobs'; Andersons, *Senie Kurzemnieki Amerikā*; Alexander Valdonis Berkis, *The Reign of Duke James in Courland, 1638-1682* (Lincoln, NE: Vaidava, 1960), p.74.
[77] Andersons, *Senie Kurzemnieki Amerikā*; Berkis, *The Reign of Duke James,* pp. 77-78.
[78] Andersons, *Senie Kurzemnieki Amerikā,* p. 366 and 368; Berkis, *The Reign of Duke James,* p.78; Christoph Rella, *Im Anfang war das Fort: Europäische Fortifizierungspolitik als Instrument zur Welteroberung; Guinea und Westindien 1415 – 1678* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2010), p. 122.
[79] Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, Sarah Lentz and Josef Köstlbauer, 'Beyond Exceptionalism–Traces of Slavery and the Slave Trade in Early Modern German, 1650-1850' in *Beyond Exceptionalism: Traces of Slavery and the Slave Trade in Early Modern Germany, 1650–1850*, eds. Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, Josef Köstlbauer and Sarah Lentz (Berlin: Boston, MA; De Gruyter Oldennbourg, 2021), 1-25 (p. 7).
[80] Jürgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Princeton: Kingston: M. Wiener, Ian Randle Publishers, 1997, p. 57.
[81] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, p. 4 and p. 9.
[82] 'Kolonialrepublik modernster Form', ibid., p. 22.
[83] Oleg Yevstratyev, 'Colonial Reality and Postcolonial Instrumentalization of the Overseas Expansion of the Duchy of Courland' in *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University, History* 65:4 (2020), 1136-1146.

The historiographical attention on Jakob is understandable given his substantial involvement in Couronian colonial affairs. However, a focus upon one sole figure is unhelpful for truly understanding the Couronian phenomenon in colonial history, leading some to question whether we should be so obsessed. Bues, Tischer, and Jakovļeva have all argued that the dominance of Jakob has caused other figures in the Couronian colonial network, such as factors, diplomats, and sailors, to be overlooked.[84] The understanding of the processes involved in the Couronian colonial experience is therefore far from complete. This thesis aims to fill some of these gaps and focus on the Couronian networks in alternative locations. Whilst it recognises that Jakob was at the centre, it also acknowledges that he was but one part of a colonial structure, which survived for some time after his death.

The obvious alternative actor is Duke Friedrich Casimir. Jakob's successor has been afforded enough importance for Berķis to blame him for the collapse of Jakob's expansionist dream, yet he has received little coverage overall.[85] Jakovļeva also points to Jakob's predecessors, seeing colonialism as part of a long-running process of dukes negotiating their status. Duke Wilhelm exercised a prominent role in industrialisation whilst Duke Friedrich started building trade and neutrality.[86] Duke Wilhelm and his daughter-in-law, Duchess Luise Charlotte also had roles constructing the extensive diplomatic network which enabled Courland to obtain shipping privileges, showing that Jakob did not have a monopoly.[87]

Such characterisations still miss a crucial component of colonial interaction and strategy formation, namely what Osterhammel referred to as 'men on the spot'.[88] This, Osterhammel argued is what truly constituted colonialism. The people that perpetrated ducal ideals: diplomats, sea captains, and garrison commanders, were all responsible for significant decisions, some of which contradicted the orders of the duke. One can think of Schmoll's construction of a new Tobagonian fort contrary to instructions to use existing structures.[89] Such people were at the forefront of a dialogue between the Baltic-Couronian context, represented by the duke in Mitau, and non-European environments with alternative cultural, geographical, and political conditions. In Courland's attempt to transform these areas into colonial spaces, instructions based upon perceptions from the metropole will have been altered to fit with practicalities and the attitudes of individuals operating far from Courland. The

[84] Bues, 'Taktieren im „Machtleeren Raum', (p. 207); Anuschka Tischer, 'West-Ost-Kommunikation im 17. Jahrhundert in ihrem Kontext: Joachim von Wicquefort als Korrespondent und Agent Herzog Jakobs von Kurland' in *Jahrbuch für Europäische Geschichte* 5 (2004), 143-160 (p.145); Jakovļeva, 'Statehood on the Territory of Latvia', (p. 280).
[85] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 183.
[86] Jakovļeva, 'Statehood on the Territory of Latvia'.
[87] Ibid. and August Seraphim, *Eine Schwester des Grossen Kurfüsten, Luise Charlotte / Markgräfin von Brandenburg, Herzogin von Kurland (1617-1676)* (Berlin: A. Duncker, 1901).
[88] Osterhammel, *Colonialism*, p. 22.
[89] Boomert, 'Amerindian- European Encounters', (p. 141).

disconnect between duke and colony will have also been exacerbated by the slow speed of news across the Atlantic.

The historiography accommodates interest in people on the spot with scattered biographies such as van Treskow's study of Schmoll or Mattiesen's analysis of Pieter Schulte's logbook.[90] More recently, Anuschka Tischer has used the case study of the ducal diplomat Joachim van Wicquefort to research trans-European diplomacy and news gathering.[91] The handling of seamen and colonists has typically revolved around identifications of ethnicity. The discourse occasionally adopts concepts of citizenship with historians such as Berķis linking loyalty to the duke with state identifiers such as 'Couronian' or 'Danish'.[92]

As discussed above, Courland's part in a Germanic colonial history has been emphasised by scholars such as Mattiesen and Längin.[93] Notions of German imperialism frame Couronian efforts within a growing recognition of the participation of Germans in colonial ventures. The role of people in the Holy Roman Empire and other Germanic territories in colonial structures has typically been overlooked and downplayed, particularly in reference to the slave trade. Scholars such as Osterhammel, influenced by the lack of pre-abolitionist colonies supported by Germanic polities, have claimed erroneously that '[s]lavery existed elsewhere: not in Germany'. Now the record is gradually being amended and Germanic influences recognised.[94] Klaus Weber has noted how the Welser and Fugger families, of Augsburg and Nuremberg respectively, profited from Atlantic slavery in the sixteenth century. Peter Meyer of Hamburg owned plantations in Barbados in the 1690s. German merchants operated in all major European hubs of colonial trade, such as London, Bordeaux, Amsterdam, Lisbon, and Cadiz, whilst some German towns became prosperous by providing brass, iron, and linen to slaving markets.[95] Anne Kuhlmann-Smirnov shows us that ownership of black servants, sold initially as slaves, was common in German princely courts throughout the early modern period.[96] Focusing on the Duchy of Courland spreads this reappraisal of the German role further eastward, joining emerging acknowledgement of Atlantic penetration into the Polish-Lithuanian

[90] von Treskow, 'Kapitän Otto Barthold Schmoll'; Mattiesen, 'Ein Tagebuch'.
[91] Fischer, 'West-Ost-Kommunikation'.
[92] Berkis, *The Reign of Duke James,* p. 186.
[93] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik;* Längin, *Die Deutschen Kolonien.*
[94] Von Mallinckrodt et al., 'Beyond Exceptionalism'. Osterhammel quote from p. 6.
[95] Klaus Weber, 'Deutschland, der Atlantische Sklavenhandel und die Plantagenwirtschaft der Neuen Welt' in *Journal of Modern European History* 7:1 (2009), 37-67 (pp. 43-45); Klaus Weber, 'Germany and the Early Modern Atlantic World: Economic Involvement and Historiography' in *Beyond Exceptionalism*, eds. von Mallinckrodt et al., 27-55.
[96] Anne Kuhlmann-Smirnov, *Schwarze Europäer im Alten Reich: Handel, Migration, Hof* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2013).

Commonwealth, observed in the trade of non-European servants and the use of exotic dyestuffs in Polish textile manufacture.[97]

In contrast to the modern revision of German Atlantic entanglement, Mattiesen's emphasis on the German nature of Couronian colonialism was rooted in nationalist fervour and ideas of German prominence originating from the Baltic crusades.[98] As Mattiesen described it, the duke's colonial policy was a continuation of this phenomenon, but in pursuit of absolutism rather than feudalism. Some Latvian writers have viewed the scenario entirely differently by emphasising Jakob's work in helping to give freedom to Latvians. None of these historians characterise Courland's outposts as Latvian colonies, however, the opportunity for serfs to become emancipated in the Atlantic is incorporated into the narrative.[99] Berķis links this feature to a broader policy of leniency towards Latvian peasants in Europe.[100] Merritt, follows up on these thoughts suggesting that Tobago has been seen as a 'free Latvian space' where Latvians can cast off the historical discourse of serfdom and foreign rule.[101]

The interest of Latvian participation in Courland's colonies speaks to modern agendas based on promotion of the ethnic nation-state, a popular concern in post-Soviet Latvia. Focus upon ethnic Latvians has not been universal in the historiography but it has been pervasive enough to obscure some important broader themes. These include engagement in a post-colonial analysis of extra-European indigenous people, as well as the recognition that colonial ventures often incorporated people of a variety of ethnic backgrounds. In both cases the domestic Baltic situation can be interesting if it is deployed correctly. The Couronian feudal colonial experience in Livonia raises questions about whether colonial strategies and perceptions transferred between the Baltic and the Atlantic. The prospect of a multi-ethnic colonial venture reveals additional questions about where the duke's agents looked to acquire manpower and expertise.

Disappointingly, studies of Courland's colonial history and studies of societies in the Caribbean and Senegambia have largely been strangers to each other. The vast majority of works reviewing the duke's overseas ambitions are written from a European context. As 1970 saw the last extensive study, discussions of post-colonialism, the sub-altern, and the de-Europeanisation of scholarly discourse has largely passed the field by. Some older texts, such as those by Mattiesen or von Mirbach, show their

[97] Craig Koslofsky, 'Slavery and Skin: The Native Americans Ockstcha Rinscha and Tuski Stannaki in the Holy Roman Empire, 1722-1734' in *Beyond Exceptionalism*, eds. von Mallinckrodt et al., 81-108 (p. 91 and 95); Jutta Wimmler, 'Invisible Products of Slavery: American Medicinals and Dyestuffs in the Holy Roman Empire' in ibid., 215-238 (p. 217).
[98] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, p. 4.
[99] Arnolds Spekke, *History of Latvia: An Outline* (Stockholm: M. Goppers, 1951), p. 248; Andersons, *Senie Kurzemnieki Amerikā.*
[100] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 58.
[101] Merritt, 'The Colony of the Colonized', (p. 502).

age with patronising descriptions of indigenous cultures which do not understand the complexities of the non-European perspective.[102] Noack remarked that, much like the written sources, secondary literature often only mentions indigenous people, especially hostile Amerindian raiders, as forces of displacement akin to climate or disease.[103] This approach does not consider the motivations for hostility. Similarly, when reading Berķis or Gray describe how Barra chased out the Dutch colonists who had ousted Barra's Couronian leaseholders, one feels a sense of surprise that they would even be involved.[104] The surprise is cultivated by the authors' disinclination to engage with how Barra perceived the situation. This gap means that there is a failure to appreciate the ways in which the Couronian colony on St Andreas Island interacted with its African neighbours and therefore the ways in which it functioned. To borrow a phrase from Dipesh Chakrabarty, writers have often neglected to 'provincialize Europe' in Courland's Atlantic experience, thus diminishing our understanding of Courland's colonies.[105]

The historian who has most adequately studied Couronians and indigenous people has been Arie Boomert. Boomert has dedicated much of his writings to the indigenous past of Trinidad and Tobago through archaeology and anthropology. In his various studies he concentrates on regional interaction, drawing together the influence of mobile indigenous societies in the Caribbean area, as well as the European settlers who attempted to colonise the two islands. Boomert recognises the contribution that studies of Fort Jacobus and the Couronian colony can supply to researching native Tobagonian societies, which is disadvantaged by the lack of archaeological activity on the island. However, the European perspective is always combined with an understanding of the broader Lesser Antilles context in order to create fulfilling findings.[106]

Unfortunately, Boomert is a rare example of a scholar of indigenous cultures who finds value in Couronian history, perhaps excepting David Gamble who used Couronian maps to discuss Gambian toponyms.[107] In most other instances, Courland is mentioned as a curious footnote often at the end of a list of European influencers to an area. The phrase 'and even Courland' will be a familiar sight to those investigating Tobagonian and Gambian history. Excellent studies on indigenous structures, societies, and trading, such as those by Saunders on the Caribbean and Curtin on Senegambia, discuss

[102] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*; Otto von Mirbach (ed.), *Briefe aus und nach Kurland während der Regierungsjahre des Herzogs Jakob* (Mitau: Friedrich Lucas, 1844).
[103] Noack, *Der Alptraum der Indigenen?*, p. 15.
[104] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland,* pp. 97-99 and Gray, 'A History of the Gambia', p. 50.
[105] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).
[106] Boomert, 'Amerindian- European Encounters'; Arie Boomert, *The Indigenous Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago: From the First Settlers until Today* (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2016; Arie Boomert, Omar R. Troncoso and Herman Hendrik van Regteren Altena, 'Archaeological-Historical Survey of Tobago, West Indies' in *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 73 (1987), 246-258.
[107] David P. Gamble, 'The Gambia: Place Names on Maps and in Travellers' Accounts up to 1825' in *Gambian Studies* 35 A (1999), p. 16.

the impact of European influence from a non-European perspective but often ignore Courland. This decision is somewhat understandable due to the duchy's short-lived presence in these places.[108]

The influential scholar and Trinidadian Prime Minister, Eric Williams, who helped form post-colonialism as a method of historical analysis, was one such historian who fleetingly mentioned Courland. In '*History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago*', Williams, eager to emphasise the numerous ills inflicted upon the people of the Caribbean and Africa by European settlers, strongly criticised the effect of European exploitation. Williams' insights into subaltern life are illuminating, however, this work ignored the nuances and differences among the European colonists. The Duchy of Courland is therefore dismissed as a another in a long line.[109] The assumption brings into question our understanding of colonialism. Courland did not accumulate a significant amount of power, resources or indeed success through its Tobagonian and Gambian experiences. They were often on the back-foot in their colonial relationships, including with indigenous people. Osterhammel's definition of colonialism as a 'a relationship of domination between an indigenous (or forcibly imported) majority and a minority of foreign invaders', does not seem to chime with Courland, which attempted control but certainly did not achieve any sort of domination.[110]

Berķis and Anderson who seemingly promoted Courland's colonial endeavours as displaying a particularly ethical reaction towards indigenous people, stand on the other end of the scale. Anderson named the Couronians as the only colonial power which respected the *mansas* of the River Gambia whilst Berķis asserted that African slaves were treated 'rather humanely'.[111] Such presentations of moral colonisers are problematic as there are limited indications as to how indigenous communities responded to the Courlanders. The voices of indigenous people and slaves are thus spoken from the mouths of the coloniser. Responses from Jakovļeva and Damman have sensibly kept sight of Courland's utilitarian aims in perusing a comparatively less abrasive colonial strategy.[112] It is important when considering the effect of colonialism on indigenous societies that we do not separate apparently 'softer' colonial approaches from the subject of economic exploitation.

The topic of colonialism and exploitation has dual meanings in the Couronian context, due to the presence of serfdom in Eastern Europe. In Livonia, nobles possessed the right to treat peasants as they saw fit, a relationship which was lifelong and inalienable. The theme of labour exploitation in this alternative context presents a different perspective on Atlantic colonialism. Comparisons between the

[108] Nicholas J. Saunders, *Peoples of the Caribbean: An Encyclopedia of Archeology and Traditional Culture* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005); Philip Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975).
[109] Eric Williams, *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago* (Port-of-Spain: PNM Pub. Co., 1962), p. 52.
[110] Osterhammel, *Colonialism*, pp. 16-17.
[111] Andersons, *Senie Kurzemnieki Amerikā,* p. 366 and 368; Berķis, The Reign of Duke James, p. 78.
[112] Jakovļeva, 'Jauns Avots', (p. 31) and Dammann, 'Die Ersten Lutherischen Geistlichen', (p. 529).

Latvian serf and the African slave has occurred throughout history. Historian Arnolds Spekke labelled serfdom the 'slavery' of Latvia.[113] Garlieb Merkel, writing in 1800 at a time when abolition of the slave trade was gaining support, called for a halt to serfdom in the Baltic and in doing so equated two types of exploitation in two different contexts.[114] The comparison was present in literary culture too. Fyodor Dostoyevsky once wrote 'He works like a Negro on a plantation or a Latvian for a German'.[115] The comparison made by Dostoyevsky is an interesting one as it portrays stratification of society through economic exploitation as analogous in both Europe and America. Karen Kupperman described a process in colonial America where English settler relations with Native Americans were informed by the English upper-class perception of the English working class.[116] In a similar way, the practices of nobles in Courland may have informed Couronian attitudes to labour in the Caribbean colonies. Stefan Donecker has found texts written in sixteenth century Livonia describing encounters between Germanic settlers and indigenous Baltic peoples in the medieval period, which borrowed heavily from the rhetoric describing Spanish encounters with Amerindian peoples. Thus, the connection between the two colonial contexts even predated Couronian expansion in the Atlantic.[117]

The same sort of phenomenon has been thought-provokingly investigated by Gunnlög Fur's study into Swedish attitudes towards the Sámi and the Lenape people neighbouring the colony of New Sweden on the Delaware in the seventeenth century. Fur's writing uses this comparative approach to find differences between ideals and practice when explaining how Swedish colonists dealt with its two colonial arenas.[118] Fur describes a confident and absolutist attitude to the Sàmi in contrast to a more reconciliatory handling of the Lenape, on the basis of a lack of Swedish resources and experience in America. Despite the disparity between them, Fur shows that encounters in Scandinavia informed perceptions of the indigenous in America and vice versa.

The sub-altern Latvian past, including the rule of the Dukes of Courland in the Baltic, is well-recognised in modern times. When Latvia became independent in 1918, the moment was described as breaking free of '700 years of captivity'.[119] Now in the twenty-first century, historiography is also

[113] Spekke, *History of Latvia*, p. 248.
[114] Garlieb Merkel, *Die Letten Vorzüglich in Liefland* (Leipzig: Heinrich Gräff, 1800).
[115] Quoted in Jukka Rislakki, *The Case for Latvia: Disinformation Campaigns against a Small Nation: Fourteen Hard Questions and Straight Answers about a Baltic Country* (Amsterdam: New York: Rodopi, 2008), p. 65.
[116] Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Settling with the Indians: The Meeting of English and Indian Cultures in America, 1580-1640* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980).
[117] Stefan Donecker, 'Est Vera India Septemtrio: Re-imagining the Baltic in the Age of Discovery' in *Re-forming Texts, Music, and Church Art in the Early Modern North*, eds. Tuomas M.S. Lehtonen and Linda Kaljundi (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 393-420.
[118] Gunnlög Fur, *Colonialism in the Margins: Cultural Encounters in New Sweden and Lapland* (Leiden: Boston, MA: Brill, 2006).
[119] '700 nebrīves gadiem'. Ēriks Jēkabsons, 'Žečpospoļitas (Polijas-Lietuvas Valsts) Varas Posms Latvijas Teritorijā 1561.–1795. Gadā: Stāvoklis Latviešu Historiogrāfijā' in *Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls* 4 (2012), 32-56 (p. 44).

investigating Courland and Livonia within a colonial framework. Aside from writers such as Violeta Kelertas who investigates Baltic post-colonialism in a post-Soviet sense, Karl Jirgens has characterised the region's long history of colonialism as a continuing state of mind which defines the national psyche today.[120] Klöker has called for the period of Germanic hegemony to be regarded as a colonial history given the political and economic subjugation of an indigenous people by settlers who imposed alien cultural standards. He does note, however, that this Germanic colonialism differed from other types of colonialism as there was no metropole in Germany, rather a tangential 'motherland'.[121] Hartmut Boockmann, writing on the medieval crusades and settlement of the Baltic region, also differentiated this phenomenon from early modern forms colonialism. In explanation, he argued that vast areas were unsettled by German people, and any new settlements were often populated by indigenous Baltic people as well as foreigners, thus rendering the term anachronistic.[122] Elsewhere, Jan de Vries regarded the Baltic as a Dutch colonial sea, because of the impact the Dutch grain trade had in tightening noble control of Baltic labour systems.[123]

The legacy of Tobago and Africa plays a very small role here. The effects of Courland's short-lived colonialism outside Europe are not particularly high in the Latvian consciousness, in contrast to places like Britain, France or even Germany, where it is more obvious. The neo-colonial impacts on Latvia, using Shohat's definition, the ones that still resonate today, are Soviet and Germanic.[124] In a fledging field of Baltic post-colonialism, it is these colonialisms that have garnered the most attention. The Couronian colonialism seems rather too 'post' to be considered in post-colonial study.

As alluded to earlier, a problem with the eagerness to insert Latvia into the notion of the Couronian golden-age, is that it has given an undue national character to the topic. This does not match the emphasis that historians of Courland have placed on the push to welcome foreign experts and craftsmen as part of developing industriousness on ducal land.[125] The phenomenon of inviting foreign workers to expand mercantile potential has also been well-noted in the study of the entire Baltic

[120] Karl E. Jirgens, 'Fusions of Discourse: Postcolonial/Postmodern Horizons in Baltic Culture' in *Baltic Postcolonialism*, ed. Violeta Kelertas (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 45-81; Merritt, 'The Colony of the Colonized', (p. 502).
[121] 'Mutterland'. Martin Klöker, 'Koloniales Modell und Regionale Literatur. Die Deutsch-Livländischen Literaturbeziehungen der Frühen Neuzeit' in *Die Baltischen Länder und Europa*, eds. Angermann et al., 37-66 (p. 40 and 43).
[122] Boockmann, *Der Deutsche Orden*, pp. 117-121.
[123] Jan de Vries, *The Economy of Europe in an Age of Crisis: 1600 – 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 72.
[124] Ella Shohat, 'Notes on the "Post-Colonial"' in *Social Text* 31/32 (1992), 99-113 (p. 102).
[125] Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*, p. 142; Jakovļeva, 'Statehood on the Territory of Latvia', (p. 276); Mārīte Jakovļeva, 'Industry in Early Modern Times: Iron Production in the Duchy of Courland' in *Industrial Heritage around the Baltic Sea,* eds. Marie Nisser, Maths Isacson, Abders Lundgren and Andis Cinis (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2012), 31-43.

region.[126] In the historiography of colonialism, the study of networks has emphasised the diversity of influences in expansionist structures. The Dutch influences in the establishment of Swedish and Brandenburgish colonial companies, as well as Scottish mercantile involvement on Zeeland's interest in oceanic trade are examples of this.[127] Erik Gøbel has written on the Danish stories in the Dutch East India Company (hereafter VOC), whilst scholars of English colonialism have noted the heavy Irish influence in numerous outposts and plantations, particularly Montserrat.[128]

Diaspora is a prominent theme in both Baltic and Senegambian contexts, particularly in reference to their facilitation of trading relations. For example, there is a vast literature on Scottish trading networks in Northern Europe.[129] The role of Jews in business and financial relations has also been emphasised in relation to a host of trading spaces, for example Amsterdam, Brandenburg and Livorno on the Mediterranean.[130] In Western Africa certain groups acted as facilitators of trading relations, for instance the Juula from the hinterlands of the upper Gambia and the Luso-African diaspora which adopted a significant role in commercial interactions between Africans and Europeans.[131] Connections of diasporic communities enabled relations of trust and expertise across broad networks. These structures provided brokers for foreigners who to make sense of trading cultures in unfamiliar territories. A vast literature is available on the various ways Europeans attempted to navigate environments where they had little control. One such place was the Mediterranean where Englishmen

[126] See contributions in J. Ph S. Lemmink and J.S.A.M. van Koningsbrugge (eds.), *Baltic Affairs: Relations between the Netherlands and North-eastern Europe, 1500-1800: Essays* (Nijmegen: Institute for Northern and Eastern European Studies, 1990); Erich Hoffmann, 'Stadtwerdung und Städtische Typologie in Schleswig-Holstein' in *Studien zur Geschichte des Ostseeraumes. III: Stadtwerdung und Städtische Typologie des Ostseegebietes bis zur Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts*, eds. Julia-K. Büthe and Thomas Riis (Odense: Odense University Press, 1999).

[127] Stellan Dahlgren and Hans Norman (eds.), *The Rise and Fall of New Sweden: Governor Johan Risingh's Journal, 1654-1655, in its Historical Context* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1988); van der Heyden, *Rote Adler*; Esther Mijers, 'A Natural Partnership?: Scotland and Zeeland in the Early Seventeenth Century' in *Shaping the Stuart World, 1603-1714: The Atlantic Connection,* ed. Allan I. Macinnes and Arthur H. Williamson (Leiden: Boston, MA: Brill, 2006), 233-261.

[128] Erik Goebel, 'Danes in the Service of the Dutch East India Company in the Seventeenth Century' in *International Journal of Maritime History* 16:1 (2004); Donald H. Akenson, *If the Irish Ran the World: Montserrat, 1630-1730* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997).

[129] Steven Murdoch, *Network North: Scottish Kin, Commercial and Covert Association in Northern Europe, 1603-1746* (Leiden: Boston, MA: Brill, 2006); Steven Murdoch and Esther Mijers, 'Migrant Destinations 1500-1750' in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Scottish History*, eds. T.M. Devine and Jenny Wormald (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 320-338.

[130] Odette Vlessing, 'The Portuguese-Jewish Merchant Community in Seventeenth-century Amsterdam' in *Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurship in Early Modern Times. Merchants and Industrialists within the Orbit of the Dutch Staple Market*, eds. Clé Lesger and Leo Noordegraaf (Den Haag: Stichting Hollandse Historische Reeks, 1995), 223-243; Ludwig Hüttl, *Friedrich Wilhelm von Brandenburg, der Große Kurfürst, 1620-1688: Eine Politische Biographie* (München: Süddeutscher Verlag, 1981); Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: the Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven, CT: London: Yale University Press, 2009).

[131] Curtin, *Economic Change*, pp. 88-93; George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), pp. 122-124.

in the Levant often overlapped company identities with ambassadorial roles but kept the two tasks separate in Venice. English representatives also tempered their religious identities to encourage trading opportunities and forming linkages across cultures.[132] In a similar vein, Herman Bennet's study on early Portuguese encounters in Western Africa, presents an intellectual shift in European theories of sovereignty in order to both enable and justify entrance into the slave trade.[133]

The issue of trust that Berķis raised has been considered in terms of a plethora of other identities aside from nationality, which affected relationships of cooperation. Peter Mathias, for example, has asserted that trading networks were based upon considerations such as reputation, similarities of character (for instance of country, confession, or culture), and familial relationships.[134] The trust of the family links both to dynastic politics and the movement of merchant family members across continental spaces. Diasporic communities and migrating individuals also provided the possibility to use mercenary specialists, common in early modern diplomacy, military, and commercial spheres.[135] Whilst investigating the ducal connections established to grow trade and prestige, it is important to contemplate the full range of available bonds. This is doubly important given Courland's low population and the ducal desire to expand overseas, which necessitated looking afar for connections. The issue of origin and background are regarded as points of interest, but not in a way that conforms to modern relationships of citizenship and nation. The thesis instead uses origin to determine what sort of human resources were available to Couronian colonial agents, as well as the backgrounds of experience and knowledge they possessed. The methodology provides an insight into the outlook of a small-power polity looking to expand. It will investigate which connections and approaches were deemed useful for the expansion of trading, colonial, and industrial practices, areas that were broadly unfamiliar to Courland.

The duchy is a particularly interesting coloniser as it was simultaneously a small-power, or to use the language of world systems, a semi-peripheral power, both globally and in Europe. Colonisers with little local power have been widely analysed in various case studies including the Portuguese in

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[132] Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560-1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 47-81; Maria Fusaro, *Political Economies of Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean: The Decline of Venice and the Rise of England 1450–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[133] Herman Bennett, *African Kings and Black Slaves: Sovereignty and Dispossession in the Early Modern Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

[134] Peter Mathias, 'Strategies for Reducing Risk by Entrepreneurs in the Early Modern Period' in *Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurship,* eds. Lesger and Noordegraaf, 5-24.

[135] Seraphim, *Eine Schwester des Grossen Kurfüsten*; Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*; Christiana Dalhede, 'Foreign merchants in Early Modern Sweden: A Case of Intermarriage, Trade and Migration' in *Facing Otherness in Early Modern Sweden; Travel, Migration and Material Transformations, 1500-1800*, eds. Magdalena Naum and Fredrik Ekengren (Woodbridge: The Baydell Press, 2018), 145-167; Tischer, 'West-Ost-Kommunikation'; Murdoch, *Network North*.

Africa, the Dutch in Japan, and the English in the Levant.[136] Courland struggled to gain traction in the unfamiliar territories of the Caribbean and Senegambia, but also in Western European trade and Eastern European geopolitics. Courland is thus a particularly extreme example. Sweden, whilst certainly a lesser power in America, was a muscular expander on the Baltic. Pieter Emmer has even seen the United Provinces as a 'minor Atlantic power' which seems incompatible from the perspective of Courland where trade was dominated by Dutch shipping.[137]

Elizabeth Mancke's concept of 'niche polities' provides one possible framework through which network expansion can be viewed from the perspective of so-called 'peripheral' powers. Mancke suggests categorising historical actors, including governments, diasporas, colonies, and companies, as polities in order to avoid an overstating of anachronistic and Eurocentric notions of all-encompassing statehood.[138] Here, a niche polity describes an interest group which sought to penetrate networks or spaces by providing particular services to more established 'consolidating' powers. Mancke uses Genoa as an example, citing its provision of banking and exploration services to the Portuguese and Spanish crowns.[139] The concept chimes with the work of other historians who emphasise how European actors attempted to establish themselves in a colonial context by penetrating already established structures. The Northern European efforts to provide slaves in Spanish and French areas of the Caribbean is one example.[140] The notion of niche polities is one way in which colonial structures can be considered intertwined or 'entangled' to use Eliga Gould's terminology, influencing each other between the boundaries erected by state identifiers.[141]

A further reason to appreciate Mancke's theories is that they offer a way to think about the different character of polities in different spaces. Thus, Sweden in the seventeenth century Baltic becomes a 'consolidating polity' and in New Sweden, a 'niche polity'. The relationship between contexts and the notion of 'space' is a crucial paradigm in which to understand this thesis, as it juxtaposes the activities of Courland in a Baltic space and in an Atlantic space. The use of the terms 'Baltic' and 'Atlantic' are intended to be used representationally. They were not used by the duke or his agents to describe any difference of geographical activity. It is also acknowledged that the situation and colonial interaction

[136] Bennett, *African Kings and Black Slaves*; Adam Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun: The Dutch Encounter with Tokugawa Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); Games, *The Web of Empire*.
[137] Pieter Emmer, 'Slavery and the Slave Trade of the Minor Atlantic Powers' in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery: Volume 3 AD 1420- AD 1804*, ed. David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 450-475.
[138] Elizabeth Mancke, 'Polity Formation and Atlantic Political Narratives' in *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World c.1450-c.1850,* eds. Nicholas Canny and Philip Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 382-389.
[139] Ibid., (p. 384).
[140] Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconcin Press, 1969), p. 75; Chris Storrs, 'Foreign Penetration of the Spanish Empire,1660–1714: Sweden, Scotland, and England' in *Shaping the Stuart World,* eds. Macinnes and Williamson, 336-365.
[141] Eliga H. Gould, 'Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery' in *The American Historical Review* 112:3 (2007), 764-786.

in Senegambia and the Lesser Antilles were entirely distinct from each other and therefore do not constitute a homogenous Atlantic sphere of interaction. The Atlantic itself can be considered a European invention as its first conceptualisations as a whole were based on European linkages.[142] Connections between the various littorals of the Atlantic Ocean were not universally implemented. For example, Paul Cohen remarks that notions of the 'Amerindian Atlantic' are a misnomer as the Amerindian people were affected by broad Atlantic interactions but very few of them experienced the entire oceanic system themselves.[143] The structures of the Atlantic were therefore imposed upon them.

Despite the deficiencies of using the Baltic/ Atlantic distinction, it remains valuable. The juxtaposition between the two maritime arenas provides a way to distinguish between the domestic, metropole setting of the Baltic, and the colonial space of the Atlantic. The two spaces provided distinct prospects for ducal activity, where venturing into the Atlantic offered new opportunities for commercial expansion, and the Baltic represented a socio-political status-quo, including vassalhood, noble power and the dominance of Dutch trading structures.

The spatial turn has opened up the concept of space to broad historical enquiry.[144] Its proponents argue that different spaces inspire alternative methods of interpretation and behaviour as a result of the connotations they carry. For instance, the connotations of the home produce a very different social context to the space of the market, court, or office. The contexts of a certain space adjust perceptions of that space and therefore produce particular banks of knowledge which form conventions of understanding. A space, such as a maritime region, therefore, becomes an epistemological arena that can be used to inform interaction there. As Stock writes 'all historical events and practices are emplaced, that is, they are locked in a physical and conceptual spatial context'.[145] The extension of the Couronian network stretched ducal reach across varied and unfamiliar spaces of understanding.

In the Braudelian way of regarding maritime space, a sea existed within a large spatial framework, made up of smaller zones of influence. These zones could stretch into the hinterlands and across into other sea regions, for example, Braudel saw the Mediterranean being influenced from Flanders and England.[146] The Baltic region is a geographically distinct area that is nearly enclosed by the Øresund Straight but has been homogenised as a socio-economic concept by phenomena such as the Hanseatic

[142] David Armitage, 'Three Concepts of Atlantic History' in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, eds. David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 11-27 (p. 12).
[143] Paul Cohen, 'Was there an Amerindian Atlantic? Reflections on the Limits of a Historiographical Concept' in *History of European Ideas* 34 (2008), 388-410.
[144] For an overview see Jo Guldi, 'The Spatial Turn in History' in *Spatial Humanities* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Scholars Lab, 2010), https://spatial.scholarslab.org/spatial-turn/the-spatial-turn-in-history/index.html [Accessed 30 October 2021]; Paul Stock, 'Introduction: History and the Uses of Space' in *The Uses of Space in Early Modern History* ed. Paul Stock (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1-25.
[145] Stock, 'Introduction', (p. 13).
[146] Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Sian Reynolds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

League, the Danish Sound Toll and Swedish attempts to encircle it. The Baltic has also been defined, in the early modern period, as a 'Dutch lake' as a consequence of Dutch commercial and technological influence.[147] In a colonial context, the Baltic region has also gained a distinct character. Yevstratyev argues that Couronian colonialism should be viewed within the genre of Baltic colonialism including Sweden, Denmark, and Brandenburg-Prussia. Yevstratyev argues this is a third type of European colonialism in the Atlantic, alongside the more popularly studied, Iberian and Northern European colonialism (in other words English, Dutch and French colonisation).[148]

The interaction between the Baltic and the Atlantic has sometimes been characterised as an interaction between a core and periphery. Where the domestic Baltic was an arena for peripheral polities, the Atlantic was where the powerful polities at the 'core' of the world system operated. In this perception, the Baltic transformed into a mere tributary of the Atlantic economy, an assumption that has been challenged by scholars such as David Ormrod who saw the Baltic maintaining significant importance.[149] Viewing the situation through the concept of Baltic colonialism, it is clear that actors in the Baltic had direct interactions with the Atlantic space in their own right. Through these interactions, Baltic people will have taken ideas from their own epistemological context into the Atlantic, in some cases adjusting them to fit with the new space or finding ways in which Baltic knowledge could be utilised.

This thesis deals with how Courlanders imagined the colonised Atlantic space. The question of what types of knowledge they took from the Baltic space into the Atlantic space is a key theme, particularly given that both spaces were colonial. The thesis also considers the ways in which Courland's colonial strategy mirrored that of Europeans already present in the Atlantic. Finally, the study aims to discuss the extent to which the duke wanted to use the Atlantic colonial sphere to escape the Baltic context which carried significant personal disadvantages. The change in spatial scenery provided an outlet for Baltic thinking to permeate into Atlantic environments, but it also created the opportunity for Courland to be characterised in an alternative Atlantic way, partially separated from the Baltic metropole.

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[147] Michael North 'The Baltic Sea' in *Oceanic Histories*, eds. David Armitage, Alison Bashford and Sujit Sivasundaram (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 209-233.
[148] Yevstratyev, 'Colonial Reality', (p. 1137).
[149] Bues, 'Taktieren im „Machtleeren Raum'; David Ormrod, 'From Seas to Ocean: Interpreting the Shift from the North Sea-Baltic World to the Atlantic, 1650-1800' in *The Caribbean and the Atlantic World Economy: Circuits of Trade, Money and Knowledge, 1650 – 1914,* eds. Adrian Leonard and David Pretel (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 15-35; Philipp Robinson Rössner, 'A Shift from the Baltic to the Atlantic in Early Modern European Commerce and Economic Activity: Evidence from the Sound Toll Registers and Scotland c.1660-1760' in *The Rise of the Atlantic economy and the North Sea/Baltic trade, 1500-1800: Proceedings of the XVth World Economic History Congress (Utrecht, Netherlands 2009)*, eds. Leos Müller, Philipp Robinson Rössner and Toshiaki Tamaki (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2011), 35-60.

The way that the thesis has been divided reflects some of the distinct spheres of interaction within the colonial network. The first chapter deals with the ducal centrepiece, an important starting point before considering alternative actors. The chapter will orientate Duke Jakob within the domestic context of Courland and the Eastern Baltic in order to understand the ducal motivations for a project of such an ambitious scale. As a central theme, the chapter investigates the opportunities that were seen to lie beyond the Baltic, and those that were attained through the use of the domestic context. A focus on the domestic aspect of Couronian colonialism, also leads us to consider alternative actors from the duchy's elite. These include members of the wider Kettler family and ducal allies within the nobility.

The next chapter investigates one method of expansion, namely the connective role of foreign affairs. The Couronain presence abroad grew significantly in line with ducal interest in expanding both European and Atlantic trade. The chapter primarily focuses on the presentation of the duchy abroad with the intention of characterising it as a neutral and benign power. Couronian interactions abroad were essential for both securing and maintaining outposts in the Atlantic, a highly competitive arena for European colonisers. The chapter compares Courland's handling of larger foreign powers in the context of the Eastern Baltic and the Atlantic, two contested regions which could be equally tumultuous. Courland's role as a small-power coloniser is of particular interest here; the chapter tracks the ways in which the duke attempted to improve upon Courland's deficiencies in prestige but ultimately failed to provide a sufficient response. The definition of foreign relations is intentionally broad, not just analysing the role of envoys, but also that of dynastic ties and actors within the colonies themselves.

The third chapter emphasises the physical movement into the Atlantic space through its focus on shipping trends in Courland between the 1630s and 1690s. The chapter relies on data from ships' account books and the Danish Sound Toll to track the trends in Couronian shipping in Europe and the Atlantic. Particular attention is paid to the orientation of Couronian trading interest, differentiating between trading patterns that were already in place, and the new connections which were sought for ducal shipping. The study finds an assertion of a distinctive Couronian trade but also concludes that the origin of captains and crew on colonial ships, emphasised diverse Baltic backgrounds.

The foreign origins of Couronian 'men on the ground', follows analysis into the seamen. Chapter four's focus on the colonists themselves, tracks the individual backgrounds and experiences of the people chosen to lead Courland's outposts. It also questions whether these people managed ducal colonies in a way that was distinct from their contemporaries and whether there was a particular Couronian or Baltic approach to their behaviour. In parallel, the chapter also tracks the strong elements which were borrowed from previous colonial ventures from Western Europe, which were adapted to suit a colonial power with limited resources. As with chapter two, the deficiencies and failure of these strategies is a prominent context for analysis.

The final chapter offers a culmination of the themes discussed in the previous sections, but also adds the extra-European context often missing from past studies of Courland. Studying the approach the Couronian colonists adopted towards indigenous peoples, incorporates themes of foreign relations, colonial management, systems of colonial knowledge, and the application of Baltic contexts onto the Atlantic. The chapter aims to consider Couronian colonialism from a number of indigenous perspectives, originating in the Caribbean, Senegambia, and the Baltic in order to inform our understanding of the response the Courlanders received towards their expansion. In doing so, it rejects the idea that Couronian colonialism was somehow more clement towards indigenous peoples and slaves than its contemporaries. The ducal colonists were regarded in much the same way as other European colonisers in both the Caribbean and Senegambia. However, there is also room within this conclusion to draw upon the unique Couronian experience of colonising in the Baltic and ask how the feudal subjugation of Baltic peoples in what is now Latvia, influenced colonial policy further afield.

Chapter One: Duke Jakob and Other Dukes

A discussion of Couronian colonialism cannot escape from the irresistible gravitational pull of Duke Jakob Kettler. His motivations have come to define Courland's expansion into the wider continent and the Atlantic. Jakob's considerable drive to further industry, trade and colonialism is undeniable; the documentary evidence includes countless memoranda attributed to Jakob, concerning even the minutiae of colonial maintenance. The ducal archive holds instructions from Jakob to his governors on where to land, where to trade, and how to interact in various encounters. It contains diplomatic correspondence with foreign rulers and officials as well as detailed communication with factors. Thorough reports touching on goods transactions, sailor recruitment and accounting also appear amongst these letter exchanges.[1] Such attention to detail required a prolific work rate. Histories describe Jakob as a diligent and occasionally obsessive workaholic, 'accustomed to getting up early in the morning and dictating letters to his agents for several hours in a row'.[2] The second convincing proof that marks Jakob as essential to Courland's colonial cause was the collapse of the endeavour after the duke's capture in 1658.

Jakob's centrality to Courland's colonial workings has inspired the historiography to bring his personal attributes to the fore. Mattiesen labelled Jakob a 'genius' who spearheaded enlightened absolutism in his duchy.[3] Nineteenth century writers, joined later by Berķis, highlighted Jakob's virtues, raising only one moral objection to Courland's participation in the slave trade which Berķis described as 'the only blot on his scutcheon'.[4] Discussions have also involved Jakob's failings from criticisms to his naivety and simple bad luck.[5]

The implementation, success, and failures of the colonial policy cannot be pinned on one man alone. As I have discussed in the introduction, Couronian colonialism relied on a plethora of other actors. Jakob's own agents acted as conduits for Jakob's strategy but their actions were also influenced by their own immediate situations. Foreign influence also affected and diverted the realisation of Jakob's colonial ideas. If we are to accept that colonial systems were intertwining networks which acted upon each other in various ways, then our focus cannot be trained on just one individual. The course of the duchy's interaction with colonialism depended on broad contexts. The return of Jakob in 1660 by

[1] For example, documents (orders, reports, acknowledgments, etc.) on the organisation of work in ducal manors, production and marketing, 1643-1717, LVVA: 554, apr. 2, l. 3043.
[2] Edgar Anderson, 'Die Kurländische Kolonie Tobago', *Baltische Hefte* 8:3 (1962), 129-153 (p. 144); 'Er war gewohnt, mit dem frühen Morgen aufzustehen und mehrere Stunden hintereinander Briefen an seine Agenten zu diktieren.' Fritz Redlich, 'Der Deutsche Fürstliche Unternehmer, eine Typische Erscheinung des 16. Jahrhunderts', *Tradition: Zeitschrift für Firmengeschichte und Unternehmerbiographie* 3:2 (1958), 98-122 (p. 109).
[3] 'Genie'. Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik,* p. 22
[4] Seraphim, (p. 532); Berkis, *The Reign of Duke James in Courland,* p. 73.
[5] Berkis, *The Reign of Duke James in Courland*, p.186 and 26; Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus,* pp. 47-48; Jakovļeva, 'Jauns Avots' (p. 58), Bella Southorn, *The Gambia: The Story of the Groundnut Colony* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1952), p. 79.

itself could not improve Courland's colonial fortunes and, indeed, St Andreas Island was only finally lost in 1661. Jakob was unable to do anything because Courland had been so ruined by war that there was no money and resources left for the outposts.

Jakob offers a useful starting point. It would be incorrect to simply ignore his influence, given his importance to spearheading the upsurge in colonial and industrial activity in Courland. However, his motivations require contextualisation. There are two main varieties of contextualisation, relevant to Jakob's status. The first is a contextualisation of space. Jakob strived to operate across multiple regions, starting in the Baltic before moving out into the wider European continent and the Atlantic. Jakob's role in the Baltic influenced his desire to create an outlet on broader stages. The attractions of the European and Atlantic spaces were related to push factors in the Baltic. Jakob lacked political agency, prestige and security domestically and so sought it through the opportunities of colonial trade. Courland was surrounded overland by powerful polities and by sea it was enclosed in the Baltic by the choke point of the Sound Toll. To some extent, the Eastern Baltic was a geopolitical prison, but the dukes of Courland needed to expand out from it in order to elicit a modicum of socio-political mobility and become what Volker Keller termed, a 'global player'.[6] Jakob's personal motivations for colonialisms should be understood within the framework of spaces being connected to personal opportunity.

The second type of contextualisation is theoretical. In the seventeenth century, various strands of political and commercial thought became prominent. Absolutism emerged in places such as Sweden and Russia. Capitalism came to prominence via the advent of the joint-stock company in Amsterdam and London. In German states and many other areas of Northern Europe there was a development in cameralism, the principle of management of the state economy through a scientific collection of resource data by a central administration. Mercantilism, the practice of centrally- motivated industrialisation and export economics, was itself exported from the United Provinces across the Baltic. Jakob's orientation within these interlinking theories of politics and economy is relevant to this debate and is an important battleground in historiography.

The prominence of Jakob lends itself to Matthiesen's argument that Jakob was an absolutist. The fact that Jakob initially pursued his aims without the nobility or other partners has also been enough for Berķis and Bilmanis to conclude the same.[7] The centrality of Jakob as a state figure, in promoting industry and commerce have also given momentum to theories expressed by Bues, Uber, and many others of the duke's mercantile disposition.[8] These historians point to the use of state apparatus and ducal land to increase industrial output as well as a ducal willingness to utilise technical knowledge

[6] Keller, 'Das Herzogtum Kurland', (p. 24).
[7] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitikder,* p. 4; Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 42; Bilmanis, *A History of Latvia*, p. 182.
[8] Bues, *Das Herzogtum Kurland*, p. 302; Uber, 'Die Religionspolitik Herzog Jakobs, (p. 181).

and attract expertise. Detractors of this opinion, such as Berķis claim that Jakob was not a mercantilist as he provided no stimulation of private industry. [9] It is precisely for this reason that Yevstratyev would rather see Jakob as a cameralist, as no significant bourgeoisie existed in Courland to promote industry. It was thus left to princely figures to develop it in the broad interests of the state rather than for private gain.[10] In an alternative criticism, Kahk and Tarvel argued that Jakob could not be mercantilist as he was not acting for the state but for himself as 'a large landlord'.[11] Eckert and Keller used similar arguments to deny the influence of absolutism, citing the absence of legislative input to Courland's industrious development. [12]

The relationship between duke and state has a significant bearing on how Couronian expansion is characterised. Investigating the domestic context reveals that Jakob was not the only component of the state and occasionally worked outside of Courland's political structure. Nevertheless, it is not easy to separate the duke from the duchy conceptually, even if one can separate him from the nobility. The ducal position within the state was an integral part of his expansionist, commercial ambitions. It provided significant resources, both in political capital and lands assets. However, the dukes also had personal reasons to pursue commerce and colonialism, namely a self-aggrandisement which was not possible in the environment of the duchy. The Couronian state which moved into spaces beyond the Baltic was therefore very different from the state that had existed since the Livonian War.

One of the ways the personal ambition of Jakob remained tied to the Baltic metropole was through the involvement of actors in domestic Couronian politics. Like the 'men on the spot' agents of the Atlantic Courland phenomenon, these political actors are often neglected, despite leaving their mark. Jakob's son, Friedrich Casimir Kettler, has sometimes been regarded as a let-down following Jakob's bold tenure as Courland's duke, as he lacked the mercantilist motivations of his father, yet he still had a part to play in Courland's colonial story. [13] The role and achievements of other nobles, such as Melchior von Fölkersam or Georg Vischer, are often only fleetingly mentioned. An investigation into the role that these people played will offer an alternative perspective of where Couronian colonialism lay in its domestic context.

Before we can begin with the diversity of figures involved in the network of Couronian colonialism, we must first introduce the primary context in which this study is rooted. The initial object of this chapter is to use Duke Jakob, the driving force behind these colonial networks, as a springboard to developing our understanding of Courland in the Atlantic. This requires placing Jakob within the context of the Baltic to understand why the outward development of new connections was deemed

[9] Berkis, *The Reign of Duke James*, p. 45.
[10] Yevstratyev, 'Colonial Reality', (pp. 1138-1139).
[11] Kahk and Tarvel, *An Economic History*, p. 64
[12] Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*, p. 36.
[13] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 183

necessary. We therefore start with the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia, and the role of the duke within that specific environment.

The Duchy of Courland and Semigallia in the Early Modern Period

The first of the Duchy of Courland's problems was its geopolitical placement, squashed between three vast, expansionist polities, in the form of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Muscovy (later the Tsardom of Russia) and the Swedish Empire. These three territorial behemoths were often at each other's throats. The Russian tsars harboured ambitions to gain access to the Baltic coast, whilst Sweden laid claim to the whole of Livonia, in its bid to further encircle the Baltic Sea. Sweden and Poland-Lithuania held deep-seated dynastic tensions, as the branch of the Vasa dynasty which ruled over Poland, vowed to dislodge their cousins in Sweden, after Johan III Vasa removed his half-brother, Erik XIV Vasa, from the Stockholm throne in 1569.

This tense atmosphere caused regular conflict in the region, and as a vassal of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Courland was expected to participate. The duchy was obliged to send 100 cavalrymen and 200 infantrymen in aid of its suzerain.[14] Courland's status often saw it become a theatre for war and plunder. The Swedish army captured Mitau in 1621, 1624 and 1658. War was an existential threat to Courland. During the Peace of Oliva, when the Kettlers were still incarcerated, Couronian delegates were initially barred from the conference until intervention from France and Brandenburg.

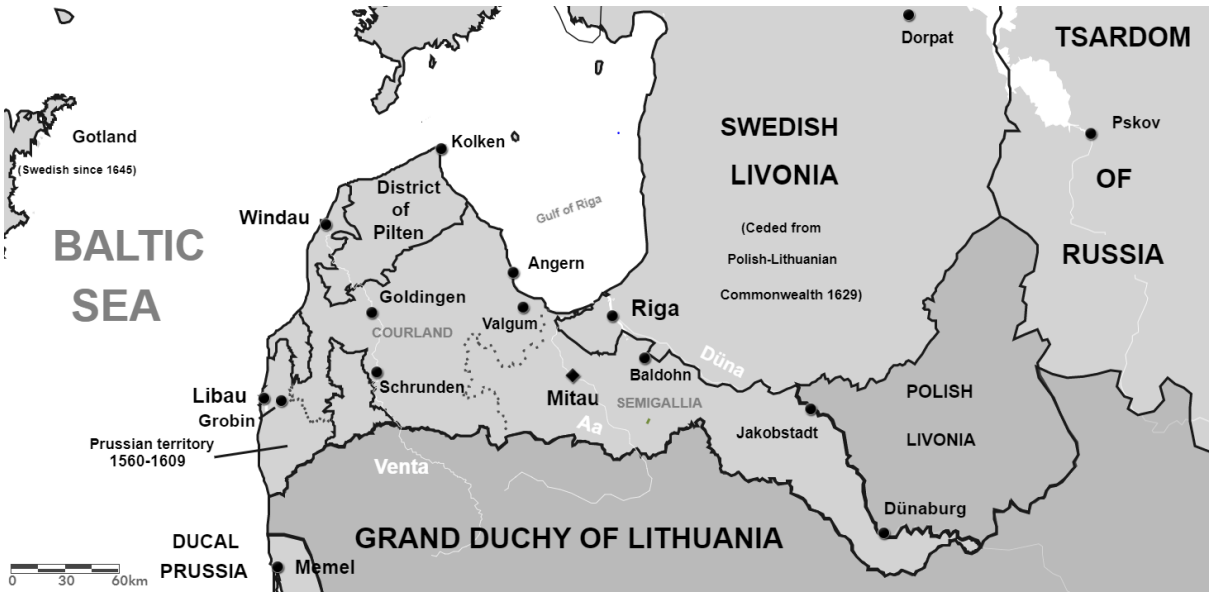


Figure 5: The Duchy of Courland in the Early Modern Period.

[14] Christoph Georg Ziegenhorn (ed.), *Staats Recht der Herzogthümer Curland und Semgallen* (Hannover-Döhren: Verlag Harro v. Hirschheydt, 1973), p. 118.

Courland's troubles with its neighbours were compounded by the fact that the powerful nobility of the duchy often neglected to pay the *Roßdienst*, a tribute the duke collected in order to raise armies. The refusal was one of the various methods by which the nobility resisted empowering the duke but presented significant difficulties to the dukedom as a whole. An armed force was only possible with noble consent as they constituted the majority of the soldiers. The peasantry was not deemed worthy enough to carry arms.[15]

In response, Duke Friedrich and Duke Jakob asserted a position of neutrality, which was first suggested in 1625. It was an initial success, and recognition for it was achieved in Sweden, Poland, Lithuania, and Muscovy. The duchy even presided over peace talks between Sweden and the Commonwealth from 1651-1653. However, the Second Northern War (1655-1660) placed this understanding under stress. Courland was routinely forced to renege on strict neutrality under pressure from the belligerent powers, particularly Sweden, which did not see it as in their interest to allow even a neutral Courland to be vassals of their enemy.[16] Duchess Luise Charlotte aptly expressed the awkward Couronian position to her brother, Elector Friedrich Wilhelm, 'The Poles say we be too Swedish, and those [the Swedes], that we be completely Polish but we are only for ourselves. With neutrality the end is ingratitude'.[17]

Swedish expansion during the seventeenth century caused additional problems related to trade. Sweden gained control of Riga during the Polish-Swedish War of 1626-1629, a significant commercial coup. It immediately became Sweden's largest city. Once an asset of the Livonian Confederacy, Riga became a rival to Couronian trading. From 1621, when Sweden initially gained Riga, tolls were levied on Couronian products traded in the city. Riga also maintained rights over transit on the Düna River, a major waterway running deep into Lithuania. The city commanded 72.6% of import and export on the Eastern Baltic, 15% of which was grain.[18] Riga was keen to protect this trade from Couronian intrusion. From 1615, it recognised Windau and Libau's right to foreign trade, but the same practice was denied other Couronian ports, such as Kolken. Riga persuaded the Swedes

[15] Mārīte Jakovļeva, 'Organizacja Sił Wojskowych Kurlandii i Próby ich Reformowania przez Księcia Jakuba Kettlera w Połowie XVII Wieku', eds. Bogusław Dybaś and Anna Ziemlewska, *Wojny Północne w XVI-XVIII Wieku: w Czterechsetlecie Bitwy pod Kircholmem* (Toruń: Tow. Nauk. w Toruniu, 2007), 105-112 (p. 112).
[16] John Freeman, 'The Struggle for Neutrality: An Examination of the Duchy of Courland in the Baltic and Atlantic, 1642–1698, *Atlantic Studies* (2021), *https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14788810.2021.1908083?needAccess=true* [Accessed 25 October 2021].
[17] 'Die Pohlen sagen, wir sein zu Schwedisch, jene wir sein gantzs polnisch und wir sein nur für Uns selbst. Aber undank ist bei der Neutralitie das Ende'. Seraphim, 'Kurland unter den Herzögen', (p. 542).
[18] Elisabeth Harder-Gersdorff, 'Riga als Handelsmetrople des Ostseeraums in der Frühen Neuzeit (16.-18. Jahrhundert)' in *Riga und der Ostseeraum: von der Gründung 1201 bis in die Frühe Neuzeit,* eds. Ilgvars Misāns and Horst Wernicke (Marburg: Herder- Institut, 2005), 261-294 (p. 261 and 269).

to intercept two boats originating from Kolken in 1690. Similarly, Riga objected to Couronian attempts to win more of the lucrative Lithuanian grain trade by lowering tolls and building a canal between the Düna and the Aa. The Aa was a far shorter river but travelled through Courland's industrial and political centre in Mitau, before dispersing outside of Riga. The project was abandoned in 1667 after considerable Swedish complaint. [19]

If the ports of the Eastern Baltic were dominated by Riga, carrying was overwhelmingly Dutch. Wielding the advantages of technology and finance, Dutch goods transit carried three quarters of Baltic rye and wheat.[20] Even at the height of Courland's trading might, Dutch ships carried 57% of Courland's trade between 1642 and 1657, compared to 26% transported by domestic carriers.[21] Additionally the States General of the United Provinces paid a lower rate of tolls at the Sound. The reliance on the Netherlands and Riga in matters of trade left domestic ports underdeveloped. According to Bues, only 5% of Courland's population inhabited urban areas. Although Riga, containing 8,000 inhabitants in the mid-seventeenth century, was considerably smaller than Danzig, it was still eight times the size of Libau and over four times the population of Windau. In 1658, Mitau was home to 5,000 people.[22] Moreover, these towns did not boast historical status. Windau, and Goldingen had been the only towns connected to the medieval powerhouse of Baltic trade: the Hanse. Even then, these ports were of only local significance. Meetings between town burghers during the age of the Livonian Order, very seldom included Couronian cities, instead fixating on Riga, Reval, and Dorpat.[23] Windau only gained city status in 1559, following Mitau in 1435. Libau was awarded town status in 1625 and had only been incorporated into Courland from Prussia in 1609.[24]

Town status afforded the ports of Courland little political power. The towns did not possess any representation in Couronian parliament, known as the *Landtag*, relying instead on the support of the duke and occasional rulings by the Polish-Lithuanian monarch. The *Formula Regiminis*, a Couronian constitutional document of 1617, explicitly removed the towns from the governing structure of the duchy. The effect of this omission was to solidify the predominance of the landed nobility and the needs of an agriculturally driven economy. The wealth of the land was chiefly found in grain, although timber was also exported in large volumes. The duchy was one of the region's leading sellers of linseed and supplemented this trade with fish, brandy, and low-quality bog iron. The potential

[19] Markus Lux, 'Riga und die Städte des Herzogtums Kurland und Semgallen', in *Riga und der Ostseeraum*, eds. Misāns and Wernicke, 408-423.
[20] David G. Kirby, *Northern Europe in the Early Modern Period: the Baltic World, 1492-1772* (London: New York: Longman, 1990), p. 229.
[21] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland,* p. 73.
[22] Bues, *Das Herzogtum Kurland*, p. 70.
[23] Ilgvars Misāns, 'Riga- ein Vorort der Livländischen Städte in Mittelalter?' in *Riga und der Ostseeraum,* eds. Misāns and Wernicke, 169-179 (p. 176).
[24] Ziegenhorn, *Staats Recht,* pp. 303-304.

output was deemed by Jakob to be unimpressive. He allegedly referred to it as 'scrap'.[25] In order to benefit the land, nobles needed to keep a tight control over the peasantry, who were kept in a state of serfdom. This state of affairs was deemed necessary due to demand for grain in Western Europe and Courland's low population. Livonia had a population density of six people per square kilometre. Areas such as England, France and German had thirty-two for the same space.[26] Such a situation was a problem for a duke minded towards mercantilism and cameralism. These two approaches to economy required the efficient use of population, and ideally a surplus population, to pursue economic industriousness. For the English political philosopher, William Petty, writing in 1662, 'fewness of people is real poverty'.[27] The Duchy lacked the wealth in people to fully take advantage of its few resources, and what it did have was mostly in the hands of the nobility.

The nobility was, without doubt, the most powerful estate in domestic affairs. The Polish-Lithuanian terms for Couronian vassalhood, implemented a system inspired by the Commonwealth's famous 'Republic of Nobles'. Although Couronian nobles did not wield the right to choose the duke, in the same way as their Polish-Lithuanian counterparts could elect their king, the Couronian *Ritterschaft* maintained the privilege of tax exemption, exclusive manorial possession and the ability to sit on the *Landtag*. The *Landtag* offered a mechanism through which nobles were able to protect their privileges. The nobility maintained the right to convene the *Landtag* every two years. If the Duke was unwilling to call it, the Polish-Lithuanian king would intervene, as he did in all ducal-noble disputes in Courland. The nobility asserted their influence further after one such Polish commission in 1642, where it was proclaimed that only Couronian nobles could serve on the duke's council.

The relationship between the duke and his nobility is typically presented as hostile. Observing the absolutist machinations of rulers elsewhere, the nobility was keen not to concede any ground. This conservativeness has often been seen as obstructing necessary ducal reforms. 'The Nobility are so jealous of their Immunities, and of making their Prince too powerful, having the experience of their Neighbours' sufferings; that they would choose to be for a while overrun by an enemy', Karl Johan von Blomberg, himself a noble, lamented in 1701.[28] The structural benefits afforded to the nobility significantly dulled the domestic power of the dukes, inspiring motivation to seek outlets away from the domestic Couronian structure.

[25] 'Fetzen'. Bues, *Das Herzogtum Kurland*, p. 58
[26] Oberländer, 'Das Konzept der Frühen Neuzeit', (p. 15).
[27] Ted McCormick, 'Population: Modes of Seventeenth Century Demographic Thought' in *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and its Empire,* eds. Philip J Stern and Carl Wennerlind (New York: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 25-45 (p. 25).
[28] von Blomberg, *An Account of Livonia,* p. 222.

The Status of the Dukes of Courland

The previous section has shown Courland as a polity lacking in the infrastructure for trade and hemmed into a corner at the end of the Baltic. The wars of its expansionist neighbours were a millstone on development, and it lacked the resources to find a domestic toehold. Only two avenues presented themselves for local expansion: incorporation of the Bishopric of Pilten, which was partially achieved in 1661, and penetrating a small amount of Riga's Lithuanian grain trade. Both strategies did not promise to effect substantial change. The next section presents the reasons why the figure of the duke would not be satisfied with the domestic situation. It outlines why he wished to seek the restoration of his fortunes beyond the duchy, but it also highlights that it was a domestic place of status which allowed such a process to occur.

The Kettler family had originally been like any other noble family in the Livonian Order. Yet, since their dramatic social mobility experienced in 1561, the relationship between the Kettlers and other noble families became strained. Tensions reached a peak during the joint rule of Duke Wilhelm in Courland, and Duke Friedrich in Semigallia. Opposed to the more diplomatic approach of his brother, Wilhelm alienated the nobility by attempting to take control of the army, recruiting foreign advisors, and creating laws from his own prerogative. In 1615 matters came to a head when Wilhelm's staunchest opponents, Gotthard and Magnus Nolde, were murdered. The subsequent appeal from the nobility to Zygmunt III of Poland-Lithuania saw Wilhelm exiled and his offspring, Jakob, excluded from inheriting the dukedom. The duchy was left to the rule of the childless Friedrich, who signed the *Formula Regiminis*. This new constitutional document safeguarded noble dominance and expected that Courland would transfer to the Polish monarch upon Friedrich's death.

The Dukes of Courland held some advantages over their noble colleagues. The Kettler family controlled roughly one third of Courland's demesne, land considered to be the richest in the duchy.[29] The duke also held enough sway in the towns to possess interests in shipbuilding, whilst his noble supporters in the council enabled effective managing of financial and monetary policy. Ducal freedoms were inherently outward facing. Whilst members of the *Landtag* held robust influence over their own manorial property, the institution did not concern itself with foreign diplomacy. Although the duke was required to pay homage to the King of Poland-Lithuania, his activities in lands not counted as enemies of Poland, were his own affair. The duke was certainly not an embodiment of the state in an absolutist sense. To be described as state action, the duke's policies would need to have been formed by cooperating with the political mechanisms of the nobility, which were largely detached from the duke's activities abroad. However, although the duke did not work as the state incarnate, his ability to branch out was by virtue of his place within it.

[29] Andrejs Plakans, *The Latvians: A Short History* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 1995), p. 49.

The historian Dariusz Kołodziejczyk argued that Courland suffered as it did, because it lacked the influential family ties of the Hohenzollerns, who ruled over the similarly vassalised Duchy of Prussia.[30] It is true that the building blocks of Brandenburg-Prussia's transformation into a kingdom originated from the Hohenzollerns placement of one foot in Prussia and the other in the Holy Roman Empire. The dukes of Courland did not have that sort of connection, however personal relations were still extremely valuable. The graduation from masters to princes meant that Courland's ruling dynasty were expected to marry into princely families. Through a series of unions, Courland was able to establish blood links to Brandenburg-Prussia, Pomerania, and Mecklenburg, expanding from the more local ties of past generations.

The Kettlers also cultivated ties in the courts of Denmark, France, and England. Wilhelm's relationship with James VI/I of Scotland and England, through which the co-duke received a pension and the king obtained geopolitical intelligence, yielded a familial relationship when the Stuart patriarch became Jakob's godfather.[31] Friedrich continued to maintain these connections, and they paid dividends when the duke mobilised his lobbying power to reinstate Jakob as his heir. Crucially, the Kettlers also accumulated enough support for their continued rule of Courland amongst the nobility of the duchy and Poland-Lithuania. Although many nobles sought to restrain the duke, it was not in their favour to be incorporated into Sweden, where they would lose their privileges, or into the Commonwealth where they would suffer diminished status within a larger polity. The ducal cultivation of relations in Poland-Lithuania was extremely valuable. The Kettlers enjoyed clement relations with Sapiehas, Gembickis, and Zadziks, families who frequently obtained positions of office in the Commonwealth.[32] Significantly, Anna Kettler, the sister of Wilhelm and Friedrich, married into a branch of the Radziwiłł family. Sustained correspondence with this family was crucial to Courland's survival as it was Zygmunt Karol and Krzysztof Radziwiłł who helped to manage the interregnum after the death of the anti-Kettler King Zygmunt III.[33]

During the young adulthood of Jakob Kettler, it was clear that Courland, and in particular its dukes, were in a disadvantageous position in terms of geography, trade, economy, and politics. The Eastern Baltic did not well suit the personal fortunes of the Kettler patriarchs, and this inspired them to find a way to expand and escape from it. Expansive connections of diplomacy, services and family had proven to be beneficial to Courland, particularly in ensuring the duchy's existence. It was this

[30] Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, 'Czy Rzeczpospolita Miała Kolonie w Afryce i Ameryce? Czyli czy Kolonia mojego Wasala jest moją Kolonią?', *http://niniwa22.cba.pl/kolodziejczyk_kolonie_w_afryce.htm* [Accessed 15 October 2019].
[31] Volker Keller, 'Zu den Anfängen der Beziehungen zwischen Kurland und England (1606-1615)' in *Die Baltischen Länder und Europa*, eds. Angermann et al., 257-267.
[32] Volker Keller, *Herzog Friedrich von Kurland (1569 - 1642): Verfassungs-, Nachfolge- und Neutralitätspolitik* (Marburg: Herder-Institut, 2005), p. 118.
[33] Ziegenhorn, *Staats Recht,* p. 58.

outward-facing attitude which played to the strengths of the duke in his political position and Jakob sought to utilise it to further strengthen his own standing. Yet the Kettler dukes did not seek to escape in such a dramatic severance from the Baltic world as, for example, Henri Valois, who fled Poland-Lithuania, complaining of noble restrictions to monarchical power, in order to inherit the more agreeable throne of France. Instead, Kettler ambitions were rooted in the titles, personal relations and lands they possessed in the duchy. These acted as a starting point for broader endeavours which would in turn help to improve the duke's place in the Baltic.

The Background of Jakob Kettler

Rather than escaping the Eastern Baltic, Jakob first found himself exiled by virtue of his father. Banishment took Jakob to Königsberg, Berlin, and Stettin, indicators of Courland's alliances and family ties. One of Jakob's aunts was the Duchess of Brandenburg-Prussia, another the daughter of the Duke of Pomerania-Wolgast. Exile meant that Jakob would be guaranteed a foreign education, which he received in Berlin, Rostock, and Leipzig. Such an education was controversial amongst sections of the nobility in Courland, who later attempted to block those who had received one from becoming ducal advisors in 1642.[34]

Jakob's further education in Western Europe began in 1634, the year after he was restored to the succession. We can therefore assume that the two were related and that his travels were intended to prepare him for his ducal role. Immediately prior, Jakob had been winning over Polish-Lithuanian trust by partaking in the 1633 Battle of Smolensk on the side of his suzerains. Having attempted to strengthen connections in the domestic situation, he sought to do the same in the West, where his elders' efforts to establish ties had already borne fruit.

Sadly, there are few documents available today which track Jakob's activities on his excursion. We know, at least, he visited the United Provinces, England and France. There, it is claimed by Eckert and Berķis, he made important contacts within the English and French courts, including with Cardinal Mazarin, a proponent of mercantilist ideas in France. Mazarin was later involved in sanctioning France and Courland's prestigious trading deals in 1643.[35] Friedrich Wilhelm is also said to have been one of Jakob's acquaintances as he had also set out for Holland in 1634. However, as he had lived in the Brandenburgish court for much of his formative years, it would be strange to think that Jakob had been unaware of his second cousin before heading westward.

Jakob's experience in the United Provinces planted seeds for his upcoming projects as duke. In various Dutch towns he would have witnessed maritime industry flourish under mercantilist ideas. He

[34] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 44.
[35] Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*, p. 47; Berkis, *The Reign of Duke James in Courland*, p. 25.

had the opportunity to study new technologies in shipbuilding, soil cultivation and engineering whilst attending economics and geography lectures at Leiden. It may be supposed that on this journey, Jakob made the key financial and business contacts which would fund Courland's economic and colonial expansion. The name of Selio Marselis, a Rotterdam financier living in Amsterdam, is mentioned regularly in the historiography and it is he who seemingly provided the prince with his first financial capital.[36]

It is possible that this trip was Jakob's first exposure to colonial commerce. Some historians, Anderson included, have theorised that colonial interests had presented themselves to the Kettlers before this point. One theory contends that Thomas Roe, a visitor to Tobago in 1610, raised the idea whilst serving as a diplomat to Courland and the Commonwealth in 1629. Another claims that Willem Usselincx, a founder of the WIC who helped establish the Swedish South Company, had also provided colonial advice.[37] Such theories require a significant amount of conjecture. Thomas Roe travelled around the world during his varied career and it is not clear why he would mention Tobago in particular, much less as a potential colonising venture from such an unlikely source as Courland. It is unclear how far Usselincx's interests lay outside of the North American mainland or indeed in what capacity he visited Courland in 1627.

Theories involving Roe and Usselincx place Duke Friedrich as an initiator of Couronian colonial efforts. Friedrich's involvement would validate Anderson's suggestion, based on Scott, that Courland's first venture to the Caribbean occurred in 1637.[38] However, these postulations are hindered by a lack of evidence. What seems more likely is that Friedrich encouraged Jakob to take advantage of further Western European connections in order to build on diplomacy and investigate economic opportunities. If Jakob concluded that he could create a 'second Holland', as historians have reported, then he was naïve.[39] Like Courland, the United Provinces was a diminutive country, which had formerly been under the yoke of a larger power. The United Provinces was also admired with some jealousy, particularly in England, for efficiently and industriously solving the same problem afflicting Courland, that of low population and few resources.[40] Courland's situation, however, was far more disadvantageous. The Dutch benefitted from their location on the apex of Europe, between the Baltic and the Mediterranean, looking out towards the North Sea and beyond to the Atlantic Ocean. Courland's sea was often enclosed. Whilst conflict had benefitted Amsterdam by disabling the entrepôt at Antwerp, war had caused Courland to lose access to Riga. Additionally, Couronian urban centres were not in a position of power to expand as the Dutch towns had, as they

[36] Yevstratyev, 'Chronological Dating', (p. 17); van Heerwaarden, 'Tobago, Koerland en Rotterdam', (p. 197).
[37] Edgar Anderson, 'The Couronians and The West Indies: The First Settlements', *Caribbean Quarterly* 5:4 (1957), 264-271 (p. 266).
[38] Ibid., (p. 266); Scott, 'The Description of Tobago', pp. 114-119.
[39] 'zweites Holland', Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitikder*, p. 12
[40] McCormick, 'Population', (p. 31 and 34).

wielded far less agency within the political system than their Dutch counterparts. For Friedrich and Jakob to concoct such a scheme, knowing that their relationships with the nobility were fragile, would have been excessively ambitious.

Nevertheless, it is clear that Western European and particularly Dutch ideas were influential throughout Jakob's reign. The duke's book collection is testament to that.[41] The ducal library contained many volumes concerning mercantilism and Atlantic travel. Books on salt working and the art of brewing were mixed in with tomes concerning mathematical engineering and the construction of fortresses. Jakob's readings on fortresses seem to have been influential. Mariusz Balcerek and Arnold Walter Lawrence both commented that the Couronian fort at St. Andreas was distinctive from other European forts in Africa, in its strict adherence to textbook models. The only comparable African fort was Brandenburg's Groß-Friedrichsburg, hardly a coincidence considering the education Jakob and Friedrich Wilhelm shared.[42]

Commerce was obviously an important facet of Jakob's thinking and he owned copies of Alexius Pedementaus' work on the origin of towns, the 1663 title 'The Law of Commercialism' (*De Iure Commerciorum)*, as well as Johannus Marquart's thoughts on mercantile law. Supplementing these titles were travel accounts of those who sailed around the world. Fernão Menez, the Portuguese explorer who travelled the Indian Ocean in the sixteenth century; Vincent le Blanc, a Frenchman who travelled extensively to Guinea, the Cape, Southern Asia, and both Americas; an account of journeys around the West Indies compiled by Christoph Ludwig Dietherr and Michael Hemmersam. All these found their way onto the shelves of Jakob's library. The vast number of books considering Dutch history is striking. For instance, there were numerous titles concerning the Dutch East and West India companies, which supplemented further volumes detailing accounts of Dutch expeditions across the seas. Dutch works on practical elements of the economy also had their place, including a range of subjects from tax collecting to shipping trade.[43] It was these interests which were to inform Jakob's management of Courland's outward economic activities.

The Outward Economics and Networking of Duke Jakob Kettler

Consistent with the principles of mercantilism, Jakob sought to promote an export economy, based around industrial output. The duchy already exported as a result of its grain trade. Much of the nobility seemed content with this situation as it afforded them power over the peasantry, importance

[41] Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*, p.48; Almut Bues, *Eine Schwierige Erbschaft: die Verhandlungen nach dem Tode Herzog Jakobs von Kurland 1682/83* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995), pp. 95-112; H. Diederichs, 'Catalogus' in *Sitzungsberichte der Kurländischen Gesellschaft für Literatur und Kunst, und Jahresbericht des Kurländischen Provinzialmuseums aus dem Jahre 1894*, 134-140.
[42] Balcerek, *Dawne Kurlandzkie Fortyfikacje*, p. 4 and 8.
[43] Diederichs, 'Catalogus', pp. 134-140.

within the domestic system and, a sufficient level of financial benefit. Conceivably, the Kettlers could have thrived from this system as regular landowners. However, the sale of grain via Dutch shipping would not grant the ducal estate the political security and connections it required. The nature of the grain trade in the Eastern Baltic necessitated subjugation to the status quo controlled by the power structures of Riga, Dutch merchants, and Poland-Lithuania. The experience of the previous dukes proved that power and security was uncertain in this region but could be supported by connections abroad. In order to assert relevance overseas it was imperative that the duke offer something more distinct than the well-established Eastern European grain trade. Jakob, having been encouraged to learn from practices in Western Europe and presumably also open to cameralist notions of wealth improvement, therefore pursued an industrialised economic strategy with the aim of establishing ties beyond the Baltic, both economically and diplomatically.

An industrialising effort across ducal lands brought increased diversification of economic output. It also separated the ducal economy from the noble economy. The decisions Jakob took were business opportunities, based upon successful practices in Western Europe. However, they aimed to raise the duke's political stock beyond the structures which mostly benefitted the noble estate.

As was the case in many cameralist, small German polities at the time, Courland's ducal finances were re-organised around investment in industrialisation. As iron was the tertiary natural resource in Courland, after grain and timber, Jakob's economic restructuring included the construction of several foundries, for example at Angern, Valgum, Baldohn, and Schrunden.[44] Distinct from cameralism elsewhere, Jakob also used resources outside of his own lands, organising iron shipments from Sweden, where iron quality was superior, and negotiating with King Frederik III of Denmark in 1664 to establish Couronian mining communities at Flekkerøy, Eidsvoll, and Kongsberg in Norway.[45] The mines were complimented by a canon foundry in Windau, but iron was also used for producing kettles, bells, and nails.[46] Iron mining occurred alongside lower-level industrial production in Courland. Cloth, rope, soap, and glass became products of Courland. These industries were either situated in towns or on ducal land. There is little evidence for such industries occurring on private, non-ducal land, indicating that the process was purely a ducal project.

[44] Jakovļeva, 'Industry in Early Modern Times'.
[45] Andre Wakefield, 'Cameralism: A German Alternative to Mercantilism' in *Mercantilism Reimagined,* eds. Stern and Wennerlind, 134-150 (p. 136); Mārīte Jakovļeva, Dita Dauziņa, Rūdolfs Brūzis, Ingar Mørkesøl Gundersen, Bernt Rundberget, Viktorija Berbe, Inga Doniņa, Valda Kļava, Gvids Straube, Valdis Bērziņš, Arturs Vīksna, Andris Actiņš, Raimonds Meija, Konrāds Popovs, Raitis Upmalīs and Anton Parfentev, 'Gone to Smelt Iron in Courland: Technology Transfer in the Development of an Early Modern Industry', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 53: 1 (2019), 102-124; Contract between Frederik III of Denmark and Duke Jakob of Courland, 13 May 1664, LVVA: 554, apr. 2, l. 3146, fol. 1.
[46] Redlich, 'Der Deutsche Fürstliche Unternehmer', (p. 104).

Ships garner the most attention of all these new exports. Shipbuilding began in Libau but moved to Windau in 1640, significantly contributing to the town's development. The number of named ships and the instances in which Couronian ships passed the Sound Toll increased dramatically. To facilitate this upsurge in activity and to bring specialist experience, Courland welcomed foreign shipbuilders. Workers arrived in Windau and Libau predominantly from the United Provinces, but were also sourced from Lübeck, Kolberg, Norway, and Denmark.[47] Such recruitment practices were not unique to ship construction, the Swedish naval dockyards at Karlskrona, established in 1680, is but one comparison.[48] Jakob also recruited Dutch experts to aid in efforts to new agricultural techniques of soil cultivation and drainage.[49]

Diversification of goods allowed for a diversification of Courland's foreign customers. Proto-industrialisation allowed for the transport of iron to Amsterdam and Lisbon, ship stock to London and muskets to Newcastle-upon-Tyne.[50] In the boom period of the 1650s, Couronian shipping through the Sound increased by 145% from the previous decade.[51] The expanded shipping is an indicator that the Duke of Courland was involved in more varied and prestigious trades than he had been previously. This new trade looked beyond Amsterdam as trading deals like the 1643 deal with France and the 1648 agreement with Portugal show.[52] During the English Civil War, Jakob Kettler dealt directly with the Royalist factor, John Cochrane, to sell muskets, gunpowder, and canons.[53] Jakob even attempted to connect Persian silk to Northern Europe via Russia and Mitau, although such plans were never realised.[54]

Through engagement in such trade, Jakob sought not only to participate in lucrative long-distance commerce, but also to develop a niche for himself. Satisfying demand for weapons, ships, and ship stock would in turn develop prestige and bring Jakob notoriety for commercial practises. To a certain extent, Jakob did start to gain this reputation. Famously, Karl X of Sweden labelled Jakob 'too rich for a duke, too poor for a King'.[55] In the United Provinces he was apparently known as the 'Skipper

[47] Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*, p. 139.
[48] Christian Koninekx, 'Recruitment of Dutch Shipwrights for the Benefit of the Royal Shipyard of the Admiralty at Karlskrona in 1718' in *Baltic Affairs:* eds. Lemmink and van Konigsbrugge, 127-140.
[49] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 62.
[50] Yevstratyev, 'Colonial Reality', (pp. 1140-1141); Sound Toll Registers Online. www.soundtoll.nl.
[51] Sound Toll Registers Online. www.soundtoll.nl.
[52] 'Traité du Commerce entre Louis XIV, Roy de France, et le Duc Jaques de Courlande, fait à Paris le 30 Decembre 1643', in *Staats Recht,* ed. Ziegenhorn, 202-203; Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, pp. 70-71.
[53] H.F. Morland Simpson and August Seraphim, 'Civil War Papers' in *Miscellany of the Scottish Historical Society* 1 (1893), 141-225.
[54] Heinz Mattiesen, 'Die Versuche zur Erschliessung eines Handelsweges Danzig-Kurland-Moskau-Asien, Besonders für Seide, 1640-1655', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 3:4 (1938), 533-567.
[55] 'Für einen Herzog zu reich, für einen König zu arm'. Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*, p. 130.

Duke' for his inclination towards maritime trade.[56] Jakob's commercial activities demanded from his customers, a place in the Western European world and the hope that he could potentially be aided when circumstances inevitably went awry in the Baltic. The duke wanted Courland to be recognised as a participant on the global stage not a forgotten Baltic victim.

Jakob Kettler and his Colonies

The establishment of additional colonial outposts on the Gambia and in Tobago, further expanded the diversification of the Duchy's commodities. Tobacco, sugar, and slaves could now be added to the growing list of products the duke had for sale. Couronian ships only occasionally carried colonial goods all the way to Windau. The majority returned only with ballast, implying that Couronian colonial wares were sold along the way, most likely in Amsterdam.[57] Jakob seems to have been very ambitious in his plans for colonial exploitation. The Couronian slave trade, for example, was not merely intended for self-sufficiency in Tobago. Jakob offered over 1,000 slaves a year to the Spanish Indies; a significant amount for a small power.[58]

Colonial trade was a further method of building prestige, asserting Courland's extra-Baltic success. Jakob's court at Mitau will have been one arena which benefitted. The duke's inventory shows that Jakob owned a box of colonial wares, as well as objects with exotic connotations, such as spoons shaped like turtles and a silver gilt rhinoceros.[59] Despite Jakob's reputation as a thrifty and humble lord, his court still inspired wonderment. The French foreign secretary, the Comte de Brienne, remarked that 'there is no more polite court in Europe, and it seemed for me that I was in France'. Such an environment may have been facilitated by exoticisms such as black servants and tropical fruits, typical showpieces for the courts of Europe.[60]

Courland's colonial activities were certainly connected to the figure of the duke by foreign travellers. Prince Ruprecht von der Pfalz, referred to the garrison of St Andreas as 'in the Duke of Courland's service' and Major Fock as 'the Duke of Courland's governor'.[61] John Scott described the Couronian possession of the island to have been achieved by a 'sinister contract of ye Duke of Courland with ye Indians', as opposed to one made by the expedition leaders.[62] The duke himself was keen for colonial

[56] 'Haertogh Schipper', Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, p. 31.
[57] Sound Toll Registers Online. www.soundtoll.nl
[58] Mattiesen, *Die Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, pp. 110-112.
[59] Bues, *Eine Schwierige Erbschaft,* pp. 95-112.
[60] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 50; Kuhlmann-Smirnov, *Schwarze Europäer*.
[61] Ruprecht von der Pfalz, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert, and the Cavaliers. Including their Private Correspondence, Now First Published from the Original Manuscripts,* ed. Elliot Warburton (London: Richard Bentley, 1849), pp. 357-358.
[62] Scott, 'The Description of Tobago', pp. 114-119.

loyalty to be tied to him. A contract signed by colonists for Tobago on 10 May 1655 declared the following:

> 'We promise and swear to God the Almighty and to His Highness, Lord Jakob in Livonia, Duke of Courland and Semigallia our merciful prince and lord, as well as to Her Highness the Duchess, and to their heirs and successors, since we are on His Highness' land, the island of Tobago, under the protection of his ordained and appointed Governor Willem Mollens, we have set it down here as humble citizens and subjects of this land, to protect His Highness' fortifications and all His Highness' ships, that His Highness has laid here on the oath, which previously mentioned ships we intend at all times to do our best to defend […] and if the will of God should be that some enemies should oppose us, so we commit ourselves […] that we will defend faithfully the previously mentioned land as well as the ships and forts to the last man'[63]

Jakob's close association with his outposts symbolically connected his fate to that of the colonies. His absence between 1658 and 1660 destabilised Courland's colonies, eventually causing their demise. The duke may have hoped that the colonies could be sustained from Amsterdam, where he employed a factor to supply the Couronian fortresses with wares and victuals. The factor in question, Hendrik Momber did not seem to agree as he was persuaded to hand over St Andreas Island to the WIC as a consequence of Jakob's disappearance. The Lampsins colony similarly persuaded the garrison on Tobago that no duke meant no supplies. A memorial sent by the Couronian envoy to the Earl of Middleton in 1687 recalled that, 'Lambson […] taking advantage of the war between the Swedes and the Poles and of the Duke's imprisonment, [tried] perfidiously to dispossess His Highness of the said Island […] persuading the garrison that the Duke was carried away prisoner by the Swedes and so [there was] no hope for the garrison to be relieved from Courland.'[64] The garrison's anxieties conflicted with the claims of the duke's diplomats, who argued that the colonists possessed ample supplies whether the duke was at liberty or not.[65]

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[63] 'Wy beloven ende sweeren tot Godt dendemachtigen, en aen den doorluchtigsten vorst, ende heer, heer Jacobus in Lyfflandt, tot Coerlandt, ende Semgallen Hertogk, onsen gen' furst ende heer insgelyck aen de Doorluchtigste Hertoginne, als oock haeren Erwen ende successents, overmits wy op syn deselver beschemminge, van syne doorl. Geordoneerde & bestelde Gouverneur Wilhelm Mollens, ons hebben neergeset om als onderdanige burgers, ende ondersaeten op dit gem. Landt ten behoeven van syn vorsteln den deselffs fort ende alle schepen, dewelcke syne Vorstl doorlt alhier opde eede hebben legged welcke voors schepen als het landt wy voorhebben syn alletyt op het beste te defenderen […] Ende indien het de wille Godts soude syn, dat sul eenige vyanden tegens ons souden willen opposeren, soo verobligeren wy ons […] dat wy het meergem Landt, als oock de schepen ende forten tot aen de Leste man getroulyck sullen defenderen'. Contract signed by soldiers serving the Duke of Courland on Tobago, 10 May 1655, Nationaal Archief, The Hague (hereafter NL-HaNA) 1.10.29, Collectie Fagel, inv. nr. 445 fols. 1-1v.

[64] The Historical Society of Trinidad and Tobago, 'An Impartial Account of the True State of the Case Concerning the Island of Tobago by the Envoy of Courland', quoted from The National Archives, London (hereafter TNA): Public Record Office C.O. 1/62. Originally published 13 March 1687. *http://library2.nalis.gov.tt/gsdl/collect/hist3/index/assoc/HASH0186/c62ac2f4.dir/doc.pdf* [Accessed 3 May 2019].

[65] 'Brieve Deduction' of Abraham Marin, Envoy of the Duke of Courland to the Court of Charles II, 15 May 1680, TNA: SP 88/15 fol. 93.

Jakob's influence in the colonial project was real as well as symbolic. The duke was intimately connected to the majority of his agents' activities through his letters and his instructions, meaning his own particular ideas about colonisation were very prominent. There were not many layers separating the duke from a sailor; Jakob received notes on the pay of each crewmember who travelled in a ducal ship.[66] Mollens reported to Jakob directly, leaving to go to Mitau between 1655 and 1658 to talk to the duke in person. When the envoys in London, Aldolf Wolfrath and Philip Freher, had failed to gain any restitution for the duke's lost colonies in 1662, Jakob took matters into his own hands by contacting Charles II, the Duke of York and the king's secretaries.[67] Whilst the colonial project sometimes benefitted from Jakob's diligence and influence, it was also prone to his mistakes. Jakob was only familiar with Senegambia and Tobago second hand. He wrote letters to the Mansa of Kongo in Latin, a language one assumes with which the Mansa was unlikely to be familiar, and he allowed Poyntz to use 120,000 acres of Tobagonian land, despite the island being, at most, only 78,000 acres in area.[68]

Although, Jakob had charged Momber with establishing a company with investors in Amsterdam, the structure of the company did not allow for corporate influence. Jakob was the sole director of the company and the originator of all instructions pertaining to it. It appears that Jakob did not appreciate sharing power. He rejected a proposal from his in-laws in Brandenburg to co-administrate an outpost at Tranquebar with Danes and Hamburgers, because he did not wish to share responsibility for it.[69] Jakob's colonialism was therefore different to the Dutch, English and French precedents which inspired it. Nevertheless, having suffered numerous setbacks after 1658, Jakob was forced to accept the help of John Poyntz in fulfilling the 1664 treaty to colonise Tobago.

Jakob pushed two aspects of colonial activity: legality and amenability. These two features were designed to both protect and win colonial territories in a highly competitive world. Jakob's claims on Tobago, for instance, were always expressed through the validity of Jakob's purchase of the island from the Earl of Warwick, the recognised owner according to Charles I. The 'amiable arrangement' was mentioned as common knowledge by Abraham Marin in 1680 and asserted in the duke's letter to the State's General on 24 August 1669.[70] Additionally, Jakob sought legal routes of restitution in The Hague, when he sent Peter van Volckershoven to obtain compensation from the Lampsins brothers in

[66] Ship's Accounts 1654-1668, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 837.
[67] Gray, *A History of The Gambia*, p. 64.
[68] Copy of a Letter sent from Jakob Kettler to the King of Combo, 13 February 1680, LVVA: 554, apr. 3, l. 449 fols. 27v-28; Poyntz, *The Present Prospect* (1683).
[69] Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus,* p. 168.
[70] 'amiable composition'. 'Brieve Deduction' of Abraham Marin, Envoy of the Duke of Courland to the Court of Charles II, 15 May 1680, TNA: SP 88/15 fol. 90v.; Copy of a Missive from Jakob Kettler to the States General, 24 August 1669, NL-HaNA: 1.13.06, Collectie de Jonge, inv. nr. 111, attachment 3.

July 1671.[71] Formal recognition was clearly important to Jakob as he sent countless, persistent messages to England until he obtained his treaty in 1664. The messages continued with even greater determination when Jakob discovered that the treaty was without teeth.

Jakob's thoroughness and persistence are detectable in his attempted amenability to a whole range of different powers. Religion is the obvious trait in which Jakob displayed flexibility. It was here that Courland's domestic situation became useful as Courland was obliged to be accommodating with religion as a vassal of Poland-Lithuania; a term of Jakob's succession was to build Catholic churches in Mitau and Goldingen. Jakob himself was not very religious, neglecting his agreed duty to instruct his sons in Lutheranism, instead allowing them to be taught by Luise Charlotte's Reformist pastor.[72] He therefore possessed few scruples in making deals with non-Lutherans. The most dramatic example is the instance in which he sought to gain three million reichsthaler from the Vatican to fund colonial settlement. It is one of the few instances in which suzerainty to Poland-Lithuania was a helpful position as Jakob was able to contact Pope Innocent X via his legate in Polock, Don Camillo Pamphili, and the Bishop of Wilno, Jerzy Tyszkiewicz in 1651.[73] Until Jakob's association with Poyntz, where he was constrained to English and Couronian Protestants, the duke was quite willing to tolerate several denominations of Christianity, in order to appeal to as many potential colonists as possible. He instructed his Tobagonian Governors Robert Benet and Johann de Lech in 1670 that 'those devoted to the Lutheran, Catholic and Reformist religion should be allowed to freely and openly carry out their services to God.[74]

Religious tolerance ensured that colonist numbers were not arbitrarily limited and was perhaps intended to produce a sympathetic attitude from colonial rivals, such as Catholic Spain. For example, Jakob sent Christoff Hagerdorn d'Esteroe to Madrid so he could state the case for Jakob settling on Trinidad. In Jakob's instructions to Hagerdorn, he asked his diplomat to stress that, 'just as in the Polish crownlands and the [Holy] Roman Empire', any Couronian colonies would welcome Catholics and other denominations to ensure 'freedom for all sorts of nations and religions.'[75]

Tolerance has been regarded by some as an example of Jakob's naivety.[76] One can possibly apply that assessment to the duke's colonial project in general. By symbolically leaving the Baltic and entering a

[71] 'Documents concerning the disputes between the heirs of Messrs Lampsins in Vlissingen and the Duke of Courland concerning the island of Tobago', NL-HaNA: 1.01.02 Staten Generaal, inv. nr. 12550.129.
[72] Uber, 'Die Religionspolitik Herzog Jakobs, (p. 186).
[73] Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*, p. 182.
[74] 'Die so Lutherischer, Catholischer und Reformiter Religion zugethan, soll zu gelaßen sein, ihren Gottes dienste frey und offentlich zu treiben'. Jakob Kettler's Instructions to Governors Robert Bennet and Johann de Lech, 1 November 1670, LVVA: 554, apr. 2, l. 2621, fol. 13v. and 17.
[75] 'wie es alhier in der Cron Polen und dem Römischen Reichens' and 'die freyheit vor allerhand Nationen und religionen'. Instructions to Christoff Hagerdorn d'Esteroe, Couronian envoy to the King of Spain, from Duke Jakob Kettler, 13 August 1673, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 724, fol. 2.
[76] Jakovļeva, 'Jauns Avots', (p. 58).

colonial space, Jakob broadened his horizons into yet another hostile environment. His network spread from an area of near-perpetual war to a stage where European powers often competed for colonial influence, where Caribbean peoples violently objected to outside impositions, and where the patronage of African *mansas* was an area of ferocious contestation.

Jakob Kettler clearly had a significant influence on the direction of colonialism from Courland, even if he was unable to make that control absolute. The motivation for the project was rooted in his lack of agency and opportunity domestically. Expansion was designed to benefit the duke economically and to raise Courland's prestige to an extent that more powerful polities would aid it if serious problems in the Baltic reared their head. The endeavour was a personal one, but it was connected to Courland's welfare as a polity. This was because Jakob possessed intertwined identities and was able to use his ducal position to pursue his ambitions. Jakob's status provided power in foreign affairs, the resources of the ducal council and use of ducal land. Colonialism and mercantilism were therefore both state and private ventures as Jakob was both a state and private person. The move from Baltic to Atlantic activity therefore originated partially from Baltic political structures. The Atlantic space allowed Jakob to act like an absolutist where he could not do so in the duchy. Thus, a new type of Courland was created in the Atlantic, based around ducal business management. It had mercantile effects where ducal influence was prominent and represented a cameralist policy to the extent that it hoped to contribute to the duchy's survival. However, the problem it primarily attempted to solve, was the insecurity of Jakob Kettler's fortunes.

The Other Colonial Dukes

Jakob's ducal successors have been criticised for not possessing the enthusiasm for colonial endeavours. Berķis blamed Friedrich Casimir for the collapse of the whole endeavour, citing the duke's penchant for spending money on his court, whilst apparently neglecting mercantile policies such as industrial production. 'Duke Friedrich Casimir was completely responsible for the failure of the colonial policy in Tobago', he wrote in 1969.[77] Considering that Jakob had been so intimately involved and associated with the fortunes of Courland's colonial affairs, blaming the comparative apathy of the next in line seems like the easy conclusion. Certainly, Friedrich Casimir did not pursue his father's various business interests quite so fanatically. In 1688, Couronian inactivity at their iron mines in Norway forced Christian V of Denmark to rescind the rights to them.[78] Friedrich Casimir was also unable to support his ailing Caribbean colony as he failed to dispatch supplies to Jan Cornelssen on Tobago in 1688, despite Cornelssen's request.[79] Friedrich Casimir lacked the ownership his father possessed over Courland's colonial plans. Whereas Jakob pursued foreign

[77] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland,* p. 183.
[78] Ibid., p. 173.
[79] Ibid., p. 182.

territories and trade from the first moment of his reign to his last, Friedrich Casimir needed convincing. During his reign, an anonymous memorandum was produced identifying the economic benefits to resettling Tobago, implying that Friedrich Casimir was evaluating whether the Kettlers would continue to colonise.[80] Whilst such a note is an indicator of a lack of colonial motivation, I do not see such preparation as being to Friedrich Casimir's detriment. Jakob's colonial ambitions had been financially costly and had yielded little success by his death in 1682. It seems perfectly reasonable that his son would seek advice as to whether an Atlantic presence was worthwhile.

The note also provides evidence that Friedrich Casimir saw colonialism not so much as a personal endeavour, but a project which affected the duchy as a whole. Using members of the ducal council as advisors presented colonialism as a policy, not a personal business venture. Although still detached from the structures of the noble *Ritterschaft* (knighthood) and the *Landtag*, Friedrich Casimir's partial detachment offered a chance for Atlantic Courland to be more integrated with broader state interests.

If Jakob had had his way, the decision would not have been Friedrich Casimir's to make. According to Jakob's will, his eldest son was to inherit Courland and Semigallia but not any colonies. These were distributed amongst Friedrich Casimir's brothers, similar to how Gotthard Kettler had distributed Courland and Semigallia between Wilhelm and Friedrich. Jakob nominated Ferdinand as the ruler of both Trinidad and Tobago, as well as the manager of any future African trade. Prince Alexander inherited the Norwegian mines.[81] The plan did not come to fruition as Alexander died fighting for Brandenburg-Prussia in 1686 and Ferdinand seemingly did not possess an interest in colonial matters until 1698.

Jakob's decision can be interpreted as confirming Berķis' argument against Friedrich Casimir; an acknowledgement that Friedrich Casimir would not continue Jakob's legacy competently or did not have the good-health to perform the diligent governance required to run a duchy and all its colonies.[82] However, it seems more likely that Jakob had realised that Friedrich Casimir had already sullied his reputation in some important quarters. In 1672, the commander of the French West Indies confiscated the *Möwe* as it sheltered from a storm in Grenada. Five years later, the *Orpheus, Rose* and *Islandfahrer* fell victim to the French admiralty; the latter two en route to Tobago.[83] On 3 August 1677, Jakob instructed Johann Beck to ask for restitution and quickly found that French officials were disturbed by the presence of a 'Couronian Regiment', headed by Friedrich Casimir and participating on the Dutch side of the Franco-Dutch War (1672-1678). The service of Friedrich Casimir, who

[80] Anonymous reflection on the economic benefits of colonising the island of Tobago, LVVA: 554, apr. 3, l. 387.
[81] 'Testament Herzog Jakobs' in Bues, *Eine Schwierige Erbschaft*, 84-90.
[82] Berkis, *The Reign of Duke James*, p. 164.
[83] Letter from Jakob Kettler to Louis XIV, 1677, quoted by Ewald von Klopmann, 'Abrégé de L'Histoire de Tabago', in 'De Koerlandse Kolonisatiepogingen op Tobago', S.J.J. Kleyntjens in *De West-Indische Gids* 30 (1949), 197-216 (p. 213); Instructions from Duke Jakob to Envoy in France, Johann Beck, 3 August 1677, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 685, fol. 2 and 4.

fought alongside his brother Karl Jakob in the Dutch army, clearly had an effect. After he had left the regiment, the prince wrote to Gaspar Fagel, grand pensionary of the States General, that 'because of the services that I have rendered to the lords of the United Provinces I have been […] prevented in navigation'. Consequently, Friedrich Casimir requested that he be aided in 'obtaining of France, the freedom of commerce and a full concession of navigation for my boats and those of the lord my father'.[84]

Friedrich Casimir, as a prominent figure in the Kettler family, was intrinsically tied to foreign perceptions of Jakob's colonies. During the restitution case in France, Jakob attempted to separate his son from the dukedom itself, commenting on his own disapproval of Friedrich Casimir's behaviour and the lack of Couronian soldiers involved in the regiment. Indeed, in Otto von Mirbach's collection of letters, we see Jakob as disappointed in his sons. Informed of Karl Jakob's initial desire to fight for France, he responded, 'we already have enough hardship, that your brother gives himself to Dutch service against our will.'[85] However, there was some purpose to allowing the brothers to participate. Firstly, it was an opportunity to give the princes war experience without leading the duchy to war itself. Secondly, it offered a chance for Friedrich Casimir to strengthen ailing ties with the United Provinces, which had been hurt by competition in Africa and the Caribbean. It is possible that such renewed ties could reverse the animosity of the States General towards Courland in colonial matters. Friedrich Casimir married into the house of Nassau-Siegen with his wedding to Sophie-Amalie in 1675. One of her uncles was Johan Maurits, the former governor of Dutch Brazil. However, it appears that the damage done to French relations was more severe than the benefits of repairing the Dutch network.

It is questionable whether the duke really opposed his sons' actions as documents in the Dutch archive suggest that he approved the transportation of Courland's dragoons to the United Provinces himself.[86] The Courland Regiment contained figures close to the centre of the Mitau administration, not only the princes, but also such the eldest son of Chancellor Melchior von Fölkersam, Johann, and the noble Willhelm Wolff Baron von Ludinghausen.[87]

After this blunder, Couronian journeys to the Caribbean became far more insecure with the threat of French privateering. Jakob may have presumed that bestowing the metropole upon Friedrich Casimir

[84] 'et qu'a cause des Services que j'ay rendus à Messieurs les Etats des Provinces unies, j'ay êtes fort traversé, et empêché dans la Navigation,' and 'procurer de la France, la Liberté du Commerce et une pleine Franchise de Navigation par tous mes Navires, et ceux de Monsieur mon Pere'. Missive from Prince Friedrich Casimir to Gaspar Fagel, 11 October 1678. NL-HaNA: 3.01.18 Radenpensionaris Gaspar Fagel, inv. nr. 116, fol. 10.
[85] Letter from Jakob Kettler to Karl Jakob Kettler, 10 January 1672 in *Briefe aus und nach Kurland*, ed. von Mirbach, 57-58.
[86] Letter from the Clerk of the Duke of Courland to the States General, 21 June 1672, NL-HaNA: 1.01.02, Staten Generaal, inv. nr. 12579.98A, fol. 1.
[87] von Mirbach, *Briefe aus und nach Kurland*, p. 166; Council of State Commission Book, NL-HaNA: 1.01.19, Raad van State, inv. nr. 1531, fol. 94.

and foreign territories upon his other sons, would have separated the state of Courland, as well as the person of Fredrich Casimir from the colonies. The outposts would have been kept in the Kettler family but not necessarily within the jurisdiction of Courland, solidifying the Kettler dynastical connection rather than the connection held by the state role of the duke.

As it happened, Friedrich Casimir continued Jakob's colonial legacy and brought it closer to state institutions. Friedrich Casimir did not pursue mercantile policies to the same intensity as Jakob, but he did not halt them either. Most notably, he increased the shipbuilding capabilities of Libau, where the harbour was extended in 1697.[88] In the 1680s, ships travelling beyond the Sound Toll and originating from Courland exceeded the levels of the 1670s by 39%. Although only 67% of the 1650s figure, the 1680s was the second busiest decade of the seventeenth century for Couronian shipping.[89]

Friedrich Casimir was also more hands-off when it came to running his colonies, although some of his injunctions could be specific. One example is his instructions to Schmoll to build on the site that Franz Monck had left behind.[90] Schmoll's journey was one in a small collection of expeditions sent from Courland, which Friedrich Casimir undertook with consultation from the ducal council. The further expeditions of Starb, Marin, and Altenbockum prove that the duke was willing to take his unintended inheritance of Tobago seriously. However, the duke was often willing to follow the more realistic trend which his father had pursued in the latter part of his life and seek cooperation. This approach saw him cede his own personal power over Courland's colonial projects.

Friedrich Casimir negotiated new terms with John Poyntz in 1683, scaling down the ambitiousness of the originals. 1200 settlers were to arrive on Tobago within the first 5-6 years rather than within the first 3 years, with 1200 more settling after a further 6 years. The agreement afforded settlers some amount of autonomy, for instance, freedom of assembly and agency over how they used their land; however, the duke was not separate from the enterprise. He was to choose the judges presiding in Tobago and he owned all coastal land as well as any minerals, metals, and pearls which were discovered.[91]

Friedrich Casimir took a further back step on Tobago under the plans formed with Brandenburg-Prussia in March 1691. These proposals would have seen Courland sell half of Tobago to Brandenburg-Prussia for 400,000 reichsthaler. The two powers planned to share responsibility for

[88] Andreas Fülberth, 'Noch Immer ein Forschungsdesiderat? Aspekte der Kurländisch-Niederländichen Beziehungen zur Zeit Herzog Jakobs', *Die Baltischen Länder*, eds. Angermann et al., 269-284 (p. 270).
[89] Sound Toll Registers Online. www.soundtoll.nl.
[90] von Treskow, 'Kapitän Barthold Otto Schmoll', (p. 68).
[91] John Poyntz, *The Present Prospect of the Famous and Fertile Island of Tobago to the Southward of Barbadoes: with a Description of the Situation, Growth, Fertility and Manufacture of the Said Island ...: to which is Added Proposals for Encouragement of all those that are Minded to Settle There*, 2nd edition, (London: John Attwood, 1695).

many aspects of the colony. Both sides would provide ships and supplies, as well as governors to administrate the island. The customs of the colony conformed to previous privileges bestowed upon it by the dukes of Courland, in that it was permitted freedom of commerce and freedom of religion. However, the balance of power was weighted towards Brandenburg. The western part of the island, which Brandenburg would have purchased, was typically the area most conducive to settlement, being much less mountainous on that side. Two thirds of the settlers were to be from Brandenburg which also maintained institutional and political supremacy. The supreme governor of Tobago was to be a Brandenburg candidate assisted by two Brandenburgers and two Courlanders.[92]

Although Friedrich Casimir himself could not rule Tobago, the association with Brandenburg was possible through him. His deceased mother was clearly a link, but Friedrich Casimir was also connected via his second wife and first cousin, Sophie Amalie, the daughter of the Great Elector. The two were married one month after the joint plans for Tobago were being finalised.

Unfortunately, for Friedrich Casimir's colonial ambitions, links to England had deteriorated from the time of his father and grandfather. The kings and administrators of that country were no longer willing to hand out concessions to Courland, as geopolitics, European treaties, and the allure of monopolistic business had trumped old and tenuous family ties with the weak and financially troubled duchy. The crumbling relationship with England is one indicator that Friedrich Casimir inherited a situation which was unripe for further colonisation. His critics forget that Jakob's colonisation bid was going nowhere fast, as his legal claims were being ignored by his former contacts in Western Europe. The economic aspect was also insecure. Momber was left penniless in 1672, partly as a result of the failed investments which he had made in the name of the Duke of Courland. The Supreme Court of Holland determined that the Kettlers owed Momber around sixty-seven Guilders and four Stuivers, but it was never paid and Momber's case against the Kettlers continued into the next generation by Hendrik Momber Junior.[93] Friedrich Casimir preferred to spend his money improving courtly life, sometimes seen as a frivolous pursuit by Berķis.[94] However, constructing highly-respected and opulent courts was a legitimate way to increase prestige at the time, without all the risks of trans-oceanic travel.

Friedrich Casimir was the last duke to send colonists to Tobago but attention towards the Caribbean island still lingered. Even Friedrich Casimir's previously disengaged brother, Ferdinand, set his sights on the Lesser Antilles. On 23 January 1698, four Middelburgers: Siemen Joos de Wolff, Jacobus de

[92] Richard Schück and Paul Kayser, *Brandenburg-Preussens Kolonial-Politik unter dem Grossen Kurfürsten und Seinen Nachfolgern (1647-1721)*, (Leipzig: F.W. Grunow, 1889), 377-385.
[93] Henri Momber Junior against Friedrich Casimir of Courland and Semigallia, 15 July 1678, NL-HaNA: 3.03.02, Inventaris van het Archief van de Hooge Raad van Holland, Zeeland en (West-) Friesland, 1582-1797, inv. nr. 1116, fols. 474-479.
[94] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p.172.

Pope, Pieter Coppyn, and Jan Loots, asked the States General permission to settle Tobago.[95] Somehow, news of this scheme reached Ferdinand and on 14 August 1698, he wrote to the States General to assert that Tobago was his by virtue of treaties made with England.[96] Ferdinand's intervention led to a business opportunity with merchants from Rotterdam. The proposals for the island are available at the municipal archives in Rotterdam and appear to have been modelled on the structure of Surinam, a Dutch administration since 1683, as they included a number of similar administrative institutions. Like the proposal for Brandenburgish Tobago, settlers possessed a degree of autonomy separate from the metropole, being able to select representatives who had influence over tax levies.[97]

The legitimacy of the venture was derived through Duke Jakob's previous relations with the English monarchy. Ferdinand's inherited role seem to be the only requirement of Ferdinand as his business partners offered him only nominal controls. Colonists were to pledge allegiance to Ferdinand, however he had minimal influence over who these colonists were. Under the plans, Ferdinand would select the governor of the island but from a choice of two, already predetermined by the company in Rotterdam. There were further limitations on the colony which cut out Couronian involvement. For instance, a note on the Rotterdam copy of the proposed agreement implored the negotiators not to allow the duke to implement freedom of religion, restricting colonists instead to Reformism and Lutheranism.[98] The Couronians found Ferdinand's lack of input unsatisfactory. In a document entitled 'Suggestions of the Lord Envoy', Christopher Praetorius, the Couronian negotiator, wondered if the duke could wield more power over governance and justice, as well as a bigger share of the profits. The Rotterdam merchants rejected this idea, remarking that the duke did not contribute enough in shares to warrant such elevated agency.[99]

The unsuccessful negotiations with the Rotterdam merchants is a sign of how ducal power over Courland's colonial ventures had dissipated and become only very slight in comparison to Jakob's heavy responsibilities. It is an indication that the figure of duke was not always a highly involved component. This was a result partly of different characters adopting control of Jakob's colonial inheritance, but also a realisation that individual responsibility for colonial matters was over-ambitious and unsustainable. Nevertheless, Friedrich Casimir and Ferdinand remain an important part of Courland's colonial story, showing that colonial attitudes were changeable and that new ideas for

[95] Letter from Siemen Joos de Wolff, Jacobus de Pope, Pieter Coppyn, and Jan Loots to the States General, 23 January 1698, Stadsarchief Rotterdam (hereafter NL-RtGAR): 33-01 Handschriften Verzameling Rotterdam, inv. nr. 3226, fols. 2-3.
[96] Letter from Ferdinand Kettler to the States General, 14 August 1698, ibid., fol. 4.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Suggestions from the Envoy of Courland, ibid., fols .48-49; Menkman, 'Stukken Betrekkelijk het Eiland Tabago, (p. 84).
[99] 'Voorslag van de Heer Envoye', Suggestions from the Envoy of Courland, 30 October 1690, NL-RtGAR: 33-01 Handschriften Verzameling Rotterdam, inv. nr. 3226, fols .48-49.

Atlantic participation formed in Jakob's absence. By virtue of Jakob's extension of Wilhelm and Friedrich's aggrandisement of the ducal role, the position of duke became associated with a colonial legacy which passed to Friedrich Casimir and then Ferdinand. However, the formation of colonial strategies was not always a solely ducal pursuit.

The Ritterschaft and the Colonies

One of the motivations for the dukes to search for opportunities outside of Courland was that of noble power. The ascendancy of the *Ritterscahft* in the duchy constrained the dukes in their ability to accumulate wealth and prestige. As the colonies were linked to Courland largely through the figure of the duke and not the state, the outposts remained outside the structures of Couronian governance as far as the nobles were concerned. Neither Tobago nor St Andreas appear to have been mentioned in the discussions of the *Landtag*.[100] It is, however, a generalisation to claim that the entire noble estate of Courland remained uninvolved.

Constitutionally, there were a number of nobles who were bound to serve the duke's interests. The ducal council was made up of the land steward, the chancellor, the chief castellan, and the land marshal, who all assisted the duke in governing the realm. In 1642, several nobles contested that these men should not be foreign, and neither should they be Courlanders with a foreign education. King Jan II Kazimierz, sided with the disgruntled nobles on the matter of foreigners but not on the matter of foreign-educated Courlanders. Thus, Jakob's council possessed an equally outward-facing education as he did. Von Völkersam had studied in Leiden, Königsberg, and Rostock. Georg Vischer, the chief castellan between 1652 and 1659 had also studied abroad and travelled extensively. Jakob's advisors were alumni of Wittenberg, Leiden, and Rostock among other institutions, as well as travellers to Holland, Italy, France, and Portugal.[101] The Duke's choices as advisors were therefore indicative of an approach that did not just focus on the immediate Baltic locality.

Jakob's noble advisors helped to lay much of the groundwork for Courland's initial forays into the Atlantic sphere. Vischer was responsible for reorganising Couronian customs to attract greater commerce, as well as restructuring ducal finances to allow for shipbuilding.[102] Several nobles were given diplomatic briefs focused on closing trade deals. Nicholaus von Korff was dispatched to Venice and in February 1646, Jakob sent Friedrich Johann von der Recke to Russia. Von der Recke replaced von Völkersam who was suffering from illness.[103] Crucially for Courland's trade in the Atlantic, Georg Fircks visited Paris and Lisbon in 1643 and 1648 respectively. During negotiations with the

[100] Proceedings of the Landtag, Dokumentensammlung des Herder-Instituts, Marburg and der Lahn (hereafter DSHI): 540 KHA 348 (I), 348 (II) and 351-353.
[101] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 49.
[102] Ibid.; Georg von Krusenstjern and Kurländische Ritterschaft (eds.), *Kurland und seine Ritterschaft* (Pfaffenhofen (Ilm): Ilmgau-Verlag Ludwig, 1971), p. 175.
[103] Mattiesen, 'Die Versuche', (p. 542).

Portuguese king, access to Portuguese colonial ports were firmly on Fircks' agenda. In October 1651, Franz Hermann von Puttkammer was sent to the United Provinces in order to obtain the States General's endorsement for Couronian activity in Africa. Puttkammer may have been considered useful in Dutch negotiations as he was the only Reformist noble present in the duchy.[104]

As a Reformist, Puttkammer shared a confession with Jakob's wife, Duchess Luise Charlotte of Courland. Menkman claimed that he was her own official, although the Ritterschaft records show the Puttkammer family was instituted into the *Ritterschaft* in 1620.[105] Luise Charlotte's presence in Mitau was useful because of her familial ties to polities outside of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. However, Luise Charlotte's role was not just passive. Throughout the Second Northern War, she wrote to Magnus de La Gardie, Swedish Governor General of Livonia, to assert Couronian neutrality, even as she and her family languished in captivity.[106] In 1647 she persuaded her brother, Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg-Prussia, to speak on her husband's behalf in Amsterdam when the duke required restitution.[107] Luise Charlotte also took a great interest in the financing of the dukedom. In 1660 and 1661, Luise Charlotte and von Fölkersam corresponded with each other on the state of the Couronian economy and how to rebuild it. She regularly fielded questions on the running of the estates and mines on ducal lands, whilst also writing to her sister, Hedwig Sophie of Hessen-Kassel, on matters of trade and commerce.[108] Luise Charlotte's contacts occasionally provided employees for colonial endeavours. Lieutenant-Colonel Philip von Seitz, who left for Gambia in April 1654, was a personal acquaintance of the duchess.[109]

Jakob's successors came to depend on their noble advisors for aid in colonial matters. As it became clear that Friedrich Casimir was hesitating over whether he would continue his father's colonial legacy, he was lobbied by noble factions in his government. Dietrich von Altenbockum, land marshal from 1679 to 1686, joined Abraham Marin to advocate further colonisation of Tobago, winning the argument against Diedrich Hinsburgh who opposed them.[110] It seems that Altenbockum was a rather passionate supporter of colonialism as, in May 1686, he was appointed governor of Tobago. [111] Marin also saw the fruits of his labour, having lobbied continuously in London for English recognition of the

[104] 'Traité due Commerce entre Louis XIV, Roy de France, et le Duc Jaques de Courlande, fait à Paris le 30 Decembre 1643' in *Staats Recht*, ed. Ziegenhorn, 202-203; Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, pp. 70-71; Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*, p. 169; Uber, 'The Duchy of Courland from 1650', (p. 176).
[105] Menkman, 'Tobago', (p. 307); von Krusenstjern and Kurländische Ritterschaft, *Kurland und seine Ritterschaft*, p. 445.
[106] August Seraphim, *Eine Schwester des Grossen Kurfüsten*, p. 51 and 98.
[107] Ibid., p. 35.
[108] Documents (orders, reports, acknowledgments, etc.) on the work organisation of ducal manors, production and marketing. 1643-1717, LVVA: 554, apr. 2, l. 3043; Seraphim, *Eine Schwester des Grossen Kurfüsten*, p. 34.
[109] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 82.
[110] Ibid., p. 177.
[111] von Treskow, 'Kapitän Barthold Otto Schmoll', (pp. 71-72); Andersons, *Senie Kurzemnieki Amerikā*, p. 279.

Couronian colony. Marin arrived with Altenbockum in October 1687 and became governor upon the former land marshal's death. Noble figures were also involved with Ferdinand's investigations into colonialism. Karl Johann von Blomberg was dispatched to London in March 1698 to win the support of local merchants and the king, as well as to see what had become of Poyntz. Von Blomberg found William III and the London merchants unwilling to consider any of his proposals whilst Poyntz was 'broken of old age and indigence'.[112]

Conclusion

The origins of Courland in the Atlantic space were firmly attached to the ducal place in Courland's political structure. The dukes had been unable to negotiate a favourable position domestically in a geopolitically threatening environment. Colonialism was Jakob's response, using his outward-looking state function to facilitate his own business interests. As Jakob utilised parts of his princely role, colonialism cannot be separated totally from the duchy itself. Yet, the project was not a state endeavour as it only applied to the parts of the state over which Jakob controlled. It was formed on the initiative of Jakob, not the towns nor the *Landtag*. Jakob instead created an alternative Atlantic Courland, which sought new opportunities for the ducal family outside of the Baltic. Jakob used the example set by his predecessors in establishing niches and connections abroad. His place in Courland was a springboard through which he increased mercantilism for his own lands. The project was cameralist to the extent that it used commerce and technical knowledge to prevent a situation where the duchy would be allowed to fall out of existence. Under Friedrich Casimir, the personal attachment was not as strong and alternative institutions, such as the ducal council wielded more influence.

Although noble involvement in the ducal colonies was minimal, its presence illustrates that Jakob should not be our only focus. The noble estate, as a whole, did not interest itself in a Couronian expansion across Atlantic spaces. However, the number of outward looking nobles who did, shows that there were domestic foundations to the colonial network. Jakob inspired the creation of that network in a bid to aggrandise his family, but it was the components of the network and the outside forces acting upon it, which influenced Couronian colonialism. The nobles, the diplomats, the factors, the colonists, and Jakob's ducal successors all had a part to play. The following chapters will investigate alternative nodes in the web of Couronian expansion. They will complement the notion that the duke was looking to transplant himself into new arenas, away from the Baltic, but they will not lose sight of the fact that the duke himself, who rarely left the Baltic physically after his succession, could not wholly impose himself on Couronian activities beyond the Commonwealth.

[112] 'brisé de vieillesse et d'indigence', von Klopmann, 'Abrégé', (p. 204).

Chapter Two: Networks of Foreign Relations

As the dukes set their sights beyond the Baltic, it became necessary for them to intensify interaction with powers and interests outside the region. The dukes pushed political prestige and lucrative trade abroad in tandem, utilising both diplomats and factors to do so. The network of diplomats and factors was the primary network through which ducal ambitions were expressed to foreign interests. They were the first step in establishing commercial relations, as well as accumulating enough capital and the goodwill to make the duke feel comfortable that he could proceed with his bold plans.

The duke required understanding in foreign spheres to have any chance of colonial success. He could not have accumulated sufficient capital without being active in Europe's major financial centres, in particular Amsterdam. He also needed the tolerance of other colonial powers to avoid major disputes in Africa and the Caribbean, which the duke knew that Courland could not win. Additionally, foreigners provided the marketplace for the duke's colonial wares. Many of Courland's exotic goods were not sold in the Eastern Baltic, but in markets further west. Foreign relations were also a matter of prestige, as Jakob sought to establish himself on the global stage, away from his troubles in North-eastern Europe.

Diplomacy played to Jakob's constitutional strengths. The *Landtag* did not possess jurisdiction over activities beyond Courland's borders, and the Polish-Lithuanian king only influenced Courland's foreign affairs if they were seen to disrupt his military alliances and rivalries. The remit of factors and envoys were subordinated under ducal authority. The prominence of the duke within these networks was doubly significant as Courland did not appoint permanent diplomats. There were no structures in place for appointing representatives, who were often recruited in an *ad hoc* manner. However, the fact that the duke commissioned an 'Envoy of the Duke of Courland' rather than a 'Couronian Ambassador', characterised the role as a private representative of the duke himself, instead of a figure of the state.

The network was a collective of people from diverse backgrounds. Occasionally diplomatic connections were created by the duke's own family and thus a system of loyalty and trust was implied, although not necessarily realised. In many instances, diplomats should be regarded as employees rather than servants. These people were connected to the duke through monetary and social relations. They will have wished to succeed because they were paid to do so or they had been required to invest in the success of ducal projects, not because they felt that they represented a dukedom. Several ducal agents represented more than one polity. Some were chosen because they were already the Polish-Lithuanian ambassador and thus possessed convenient mutual connections with Courland. Consequently, the network of the duke abroad was more informal than formal; not an organ of the Couronian state structure, but a conglomeration of contractors offering services.

These people nevertheless attempted to articulate the essence of ducal colonial strategy. They were regarded as a crucial piece of the puzzle for ducal ambitions. It was their duty to reassure foreign interests of Courland's untroublesome insertion into a volatile global environment. In times when Courland's colonial project had stalled, the diplomatic interaction of the Couronian representatives became even more crucial, and they were utilised relentlessly to re-establish an Atlantic presence. During these times, diplomatic and commercial lobbying would have been the sole reminders that Couronian possessed colonial interests at all.

The People of Courland's Diplomatic Networks

The Couronian diplomatic network in the colonial era spread further and broader than it ever had done before. The duke was undoubtedly at the centre of this network and would occasionally step in to lead diplomatic correspondence himself. Jakob intervened personally when both Philip Freher and Adolf Wolfrath lacked the gravitas to achieve meaningful conversations with England's elite. Jakob was particularly studious in pursuing his lost ships; sending letters of complaint to the monarchs of Spain, France, England, and the Dutch States General.[1]

Yet the duke was often required to rely on his representatives who were much more mobile than he was. Whilst ducal motivations lay at the centre of the diplomatic network, the integrity of the diplomatic structures he cultivated, relied on the personal relations of these agents, as well as their own motives. The Couronian diplomatic network represented a plethora of different individuals, interests, backgrounds, and relationships. Although many of these connections included envoys, many others did not exist because of high diplomatic relationships. There were also ties of family, business, and proximity between 'men on the spot, who engaged in colonial encounters. Many negotiations depended on the interpretation of the individual envoys. For instance, de Bye's recommendation that Couronian ports pursue aggressive tactics against Dutch traders, or Wolfrath and Quinzano's mistaken belief that they had succeeded in securing colonial concessions from England and Spain respectively. As such, the direction of Courland's colonial experience would be heavily influenced by temporary representatives who often did not possess significant connections to the dukedom itself.

The agents with the closest relationship to Courland as political entity were noble members of the ducal council. The participation of high-ranking nobles was usually a sign that the matter was pertinent to the state of Courland as a whole, not the duke as a private person. Negotiations regarding neutrality, for instance, were seen as crucial to the duchy's survival. Melchior von Völkersam led essential discussions involving Courland's existence at Oliva, as well as attending the Polish-Swedish

[1] For example, letter from Duke Jakob to the Mayors of Amsterdam, 5 June 1654, Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsarchief (hereafter NL-SAA): 5026, Archief van de Burgemeesters, inv. nr. 29, fol. 3; von Klopmann, 'Abrégé', (pp. 212-213).

peace talks in 1651 and 1652. The previous chancellor, Christoph Fircks had first raised Couronian neutrality in Poland-Lithuania.

Prestigious or unprecedented trading deals were also considered noble work, particularly when the diplomatic network was young. In this instance, the representative would also need to establish diplomatic channels before adding commercial ties. This was the case with von Völkersam and Moscow, as well as Nicolaus Korff and Venice. The voice of a noble, close to the mechanisms of state, lent gravitas to the negotiations. Nobles were therefore often used in the early period of Courland's diplomatic expansion during the 1640s and 50s. Christoph Fircks' son, Georg, after his posting in Warsaw, was tasked with finding trading deals in Western Europe. Fircks pushed for trade in France, Spain, Portugal, and England throughout the 1640s. Nobles rarely interceded on talks regarding the colonies, which were a private ducal venture. Exceptions to this were Puttkammer in The Hague and von Blomberg in London.

Dukes Wilhelm and Friedrich had laid significant groundwork in the diplomatic sphere. However, the need for prominent nobles to establish further ties shows that these relationships were still fledgling. As pre-existing ties to potential trading partners and colonial competitors were not well-established, the dukes often thought it prudent to use routes already put in place by larger powers. This was the case with Nicholas de Bye who was the Polish ambassador in the United Provinces. De Bye's continuing brief for Poland gave specialist weight to Momber's attempts to win back ships captured by the Admiralty. De Bye used his contacts in the Low Countries region to connect the duke to further interests. His talks with the Spanish ambassadors in The Hague and in Flanders, permitted the visibility of Couronian issues in Madrid, enabling Courland's own envoys to operate there later. The practice of borrowing ambassadors for envoy work seems commonplace for smaller polities. De Bye was also employed by the Duke of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorf. He was not the only Couronian agent to hold more than one brief. Johann Beck, who raised the issue of captured ships in Paris in 1677, earned his main commission as the envoy of the Hanseatic cities to France. Joachim van Wicquefort worked as an envoy for Hessen-Kassel between 1632 and 1665, whilst his brother, Abraham, worked in Paris for both Courland and Brandenburg.[2]

It was also common for the dukes to go through other princely states to access larger powers. In her analysis of correspondence between the dukes and the van Wicquevort brothers, Tischer noted that Hesse was crucial in connecting Courland, the United Provinces, and France. Brandenburg-Prussia was also connected to western polities by the prominent positioning of Hessen-Kassel, in particular the regent Amalie Elisabeth.[3] Courland was joined to both Hesse and Brandenburg through marriage

[2] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 65; Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*; Tischer, 'West-Ost-Kommunikation'.
[3] Tischer, 'West-Ost-Kommunikation', (p. 148).

alliances. Luise Charlotte obviously provided a strong link to Brandenburg-Prussia, but her sister, Hedwig Sophie, was the wife of Wilhelm VI of Hessen-Kassel, Amalie Elisabeth's son. Jakob and Luise Charlotte's daughter, Amalia Kettler, married Karl I of Hessen-Kassel, whilst her elder sister, Luise Elisabeth married Friedrich II of Hessen-Homburg. Friedrich Casimir's first marriage to Sophie Amalie of Nassau-Siegen, gave him the base to involve himself in the courtly life of the House of Orange, as well as legal cases concerning Courland in The Hague.[4]

Women strengthened a vast array of Courland's network connections abroad. The role was an active one, something to which Luise Charlotte's prolific letter writing attests. Her links to her brother and de la Gardie were exercised frequently during the Second Northern War to manoeuvre Courland into a favourable position. Her correspondence with Hedwig Sophie on matters of trade helped to inform Courland's relationship with the van Wicqueforts through Hesse. The duchess also maintained contact with the Brandenburger diplomat, Otto von Schwerin, who aided negotiations for the return of Couronian ships from Amsterdam in 1647.[5] Luise Charlotte's mother, Elisabeth Charlotte, lent her additional support to matters of Couronian trade. In 1655, Jakob was engaged in talks with the former mayor of Amsterdam, Jan Huydecoper, about Momber's alleged break of contract when he proved reluctant to finance loss-making Couronian ventures any further. Elisabeth Charlotte also wrote to Huydecoper on 13 October 1655, affirming the position that 'the factor in Amsterdam did not behave at all well' but impressed on Huydecoper that she thought both Momber and the duke were willing to make compromises to reignite Couronain trade in the central Dutch entrepôt.[6]

The connections facilitated through women did not just take shape through alliances of family and marriage. Abraham Marin is a prominent example of how Couronian agents positioned themselves near to favourites of those in power. Diederichs described how Marin struggled in 1680 to obtain an audience with Charles II who was reluctant to consider Jakob's disappointment regarding the 1664 treaty. However, by 1681 all had changed, and Charles had asked the Governor of Barbados to assist Couronian efforts to recolonise Tobago. Diederichs argued that the sudden change of heart was partly caused by a conversation Charles had with his mistress, the actress Nell Gwyn, who persuaded the king to reconsider the Couronian case.[7]

Diderichs' inclusion of Gwyn is somewhat unexpected and seems apocryphal given that he provided quotes for the conversation between the king and his lover. The quotations themselves may not be genuine, however Gwyn's affinity for Courland's cause was real. A legal document dating from May

[4] Ziegenhorn, *Staats Recht,* p. 65.
[5] Seraphim, *Eine Schwester des Grossen Kurfüsten*, p. 440.
[6] 'dero Factor in Ambstelerdam sich nicht allerdinges wohl verhalten'. Letter from Elisabeth Charlotte of Brandenburg to Jan Hudecoper, 13 October 1655, Het Utrechts Archief (hereafter NL-UtHUA): 67 Familie Huydecoper, inv. nr. 29, letter 6.
[7] H. Diederichs, *Herzog Jacobs von Kurland Kolonien an der Westküste von Afrika* (Mitau: J.F. Steffenhagen und Sohn, 1890), p. 65.

1682 reveals the link. This document is an appeal by Marin, demanding restitution from Mary Wollstonecraft, her sister Anne Abell, and Anne's husband, William Abell. He argued that the three of them were guilty of not paying rent for lodging in his house in London, neither had they repaid him for the twenty pounds he gave the Abells to buy stock for their ailing business. This claim was followed by a counter from the representatives of Wollstonecraft and Richard Webster, Anne's new husband after William's death. This complaint alleged that Marin had his own debts, listed in an accompanying document. These included various goods, ranging from shoes, curtains, brandy, and rent for three months at his residence at St Martins in the Fields.[8] The documentation is significant as it notes that Wollstonecraft and Marin were colleagues, in the service of Nell Gwyn. The initial complaint commented:

> 'your Orator [Marin…] yeares agoe living in the house of M. Ellanor Gwyn being then tutor governor to her sonne the now right honorable the Earle of Burford and there dwelling in the same house att that tyme one Mary Woolstonecraft spinster who was servant in the same house and then was putt to attend upon the said Earle of Burford'.[9]

The Earl of Burford was Charles' illegitimate son with Gwyn. He became the royal court's honorary Master of Hawks in 1675 at the age of five. In October 1679, Jakob continued his father's habit of sending hawks to the royal court in England. All twenty of them were technically received by Charles' son and Marin's pupil.[10] These Couronian connections to Charles through Burford and Gwyn should be considered deliberate tactics to gain greater diplomatic leverage and likely vindicates Diederichs' stance that Gwyn aided Jakob's colonial ambitions.

Further connections were made on a rather *ad hoc* basis. It was occasionally helpful to engage the services of someone who knew the target country well. John Lucas Lyon appears to have been a native of England, whilst Don Bartolomeo Quinzano and Don Juan Guillermo Chetelet were Spanish. This was not always the case. It was certainly not true of Marin, who confessed to the Earl of Nottingham that he was 'unacquainted with the English law'.[11] Other diplomats were similarly alien. Adolf Wolfrath came from Rostock and 'Jan Bretislaw Mislik, Baron of Hirssof' who negotiated with Oliver Cromwell, was the baron of Hirschoff, a small Bohemian manor. According to Mattiesen, he, like Beck, was the Hanse representative in London.[12]

A fascinating insight into the recruitment of envoys is provided by the papers of John Thurloe, a secretary for state for the English Commonwealth. In 1657 and 1658, Thurloe received several letters

[8] Marin v Woolstonecraft, May 1682, TNA: C 5/521/31.
[9] Ibid., fol. 1.
[10] Letter from Duke Jakob to the Earl of Burford, 9 October 1679, TNA: SP 88/15, fols. 76-77; Letter from Duke Jakob to Charles II, 9 October 1679, ibid., fols 78-79.
[11] Marin v Woolstonecraft, May 1682, TNA: C 5/521/31, fol. 1.
[12] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, p. 395; information about his family is available at Bernd Warlich, 'Mislík [Myslík, Misslig, Mißling, Mistling, Mislich, Mißlich] von Hyršov [Mislík z Hyršova], Johann Sigismund [Jan Zigmund] Freiherr' (20 June 2012). *https://www.30jaehrigerkrieg.de* [Accessed 1 October 2021].

from a certain Mr Bradshaw who had failed to enter Moscow and instead found himself staying at the pleasure of the duke in Grobin. Bradshaw was assisted by a secretary named Elias von Straus, the Baron of Trebitsch in Brandenburg. On 6 April 1658, Bradshaw informed Thurloe that,

> 'My Secretary Straus is going for England, with a commission of agencie from the duke of Courland, which because it gives occasion to the Swedish minister (if not the kinge himself) to suspect that the duke […] hath beene a backfriend […] and that my secretary, to ingratiate himselfe with the duke, he hath not been so faithfull to me as he ought'.[13]

Finding little success in accessing Moscow, Bradshaw decided to return to Hamburg, where he was the English resident. Around this time, the duke arrived in Grobin to meet his party, but requested a meeting with Strauss before he spoke to Bradshaw. At this meeting, the duke offered the baron employment should Bradshaw turn back for Hamburg without visiting Moscow. Bradshaw, disturbed at this approach, forbade Strauss from entering the duke's service before both Bradshaw and Strauss had returned to Hamburg. A Swedish official informed Bradshaw that Strauss had disobeyed him and accepted ducal commission. Indeed, when the pair reached Memel, Strauss asked Bradshaw for a reference, which Bradshaw refused. Eventually Strauss revealed that he had prematurely given his oath to Jakob, at which point Bradshaw dismissed him.[14]

Strauss' appointment was confirmed by Francesco Giavarina, a Venetian agent in London, who reported on 3 May 1658, that von Strauss had come 'to request the protection of His Highness [Cromwell], to complete some shipping affairs which were not completed the previous year and also in order to discuss some private matter between his master and the Earl of Warwick.'[15] Strauss' opportunity with the duke ultimately led to his doom as he lost his salary when Jakob lost his freedom. Thurloe received a petition from him on 8 March 1659, from debtors' prison where he had languished for six months, having accrued debts of over one-hundred pounds. The former envoy pleaded that as he was 'a stranger' in England that he had no other recourse to earn money. Strauss died in the same year as his appeal.[16]

Previous Couronian Expansion in Diplomacy

The discussion in the previous chapter has shown that the Duke of Courland did not maintain an enviable position in his locality. The Duchy was at significant military risk from all its neighbours.

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[13] 'State Papers, 1658: April (1 of 6),' in *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe, Volume 7, March 1658 - May 1660*, ed. Thomas Birch (London: Fletcher Gyles, 1742), 42-55. British History Online, *http://www.british-history.ac.uk/thurloe-papers/vol7/pp42-55,* [Accessed 5 August 2021].

[14] Ibid.

[15] 'um den Schutz seiner Hoheit [Cromwell] zu erbitten, einige Seefahrtsangelegenheiten, die im vorigen Jahr nicht abegeschlossen werde konnten zu erledigen und auch um einige Privatangelegenheiten zwischen seinem Herrn und dem Earl of Warwick zu besprechen'. Anderson, 'Die ersten Kurländischen Expeditionen', (p. 28).

[16] 'State Papers, 1660: March (1 of 5),' in *State Papers of John Thurloe, Volume 7,* ed. Birch (London: Fletcher Gyles, 1742), 825-835. British History Online, *http://www.british-history.ac.uk/thurloe-papers/vol7/pp825-835,* [Accessed 5 August 2021].

The Duke of Courland was also required to contend with the doubtful succession of his dynasty. Because of Duke Wilhelm's exile in 1617 and Duke Friedrich's lack of heirs, the territory was viewed as a potential acquisition for direct rule of the Polish crown by Zygmunt III and his successor, Władysław IV.

Diplomatic strategies were utilised to alleviate Courland's potentially fatal pressures. Wilhelm and Friedrich implemented the core diplomatic strategies of expanding dialogue with other parts of Europe and establishing neutrality. This approach provided the foundations for Jakob's push to establish greater ducal autonomy away from the Commonwealth and the *Landtag*, from which Jakob could pursue his ambitions in trade and colonialism. The twin policies of diplomatic engagement and the appearance of neutrality also provided the general model for Courland's Atlantic activities.

The Couronian position of neutrality had been engineered by Friedrich in response to the Swedish invasions of 1621 and 1625. Fearing that Courland would not survive another one, Friedrich pursued neutrality. Friedrich was unable to militarise like his peers in Brandenburg-Prussia because he had previously struggled to raise the funds and enthusiasm amongst the nobility to amass an effective army.[17] On 23 January 1625, the duke instructed Chancellor Christoph Fircks to mention the possibility of Courland's neutrality to the Lithuanian Grand Hetman, Krzystof Radziwiłł.[18] By 1628, Friedrich had secured uneasy recognition from both Sweden and the Commonwealth, maintained as long as there was a truce between the two powers. In the following years, the initial acknowledgment was bolstered by further accords, such as a 1635 treaty confirming Courland as a neutral space for Swedes and Poles. In 1634, King Władysław confirmed Courland's neutrality, followed by Sweden in Summer 1635.[19]

The second pre-Jakob achievement in diplomacy came through ducal correspondence in the west of Europe. The example of England, well documented by Volker Keller and Jan Fedorowicz, is the most prominent and impressive linkage formed before 1642. [20] Duke Wilhelm began corresponding with King James I/ VI in 1606. The connection was prompted by a family tie with the Queen Dowager of Denmark, Sophie of Mecklenburg, who was Wilhelm's cousin and James' mother-in-law. [21] From 1607 onwards, Wilhelm informed the king about events in the Commonwealth, particularly pertaining to tensions with Sweden. In return, he received a pension of 400 pounds per annum.[22] This money was

[17] Keller, *Herzog Friedrich*, p. 197.
[18] Ibid., p. 149 and 157.
[19] 'Consensus Regis Vladislai Duci Friderico, ad Ineunda Pacta Neutralitatis cum Svecia datus, die 12. Septembris 1634' in *Staats Recht*, ed. Ziegenhorn, 185.
[20] Keller, 'Zu den Anfängen', (p. 267).
[21] Jan Fedorowicz, 'Courland as a Factor in Relations between England and Poland in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century', *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis: Zeszty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego: Nauki Humanistyczno-Społeczne: Folia Historica* 1:27 (1978), 41-60 (p. 44).
[22] Ibid.

discontinued at some point although James often claimed that he was still in debt to the duchy. His son Charles I paid the duke a further 60,000 guldens during his reign.[23]

Wilhelm believed his association with James intimate enough to invite the monarch to both his wedding to Sophie of Prussia in 1609, and to Jakob's christening in 1610. The invitations were politely declined; however, James did agree to become Jakob's godfather, binding the Kettlers and Stuarts together with even stronger family ties.[24] The remarkable connection between the two dynasties produced rumours that James had bestowed Tobago on the young prince at a very early age, thus planting the seeds of colonial ambition from the time of Jakob's birth. This tale, propounded in older historiographical material, such as that of Praetorius, von Mirbach, and von Klopmann, to lend added weight to Courland's claims over Tobago, has unfortunately seeped into works by Southorn, Mijers, and van Heerwaarden, among many others.[25] It has long been accepted in the field that there is a glaring lack of evidence for this claim, particularly as James granted Tobago to the Earl of Pembroke in 1628.[26]

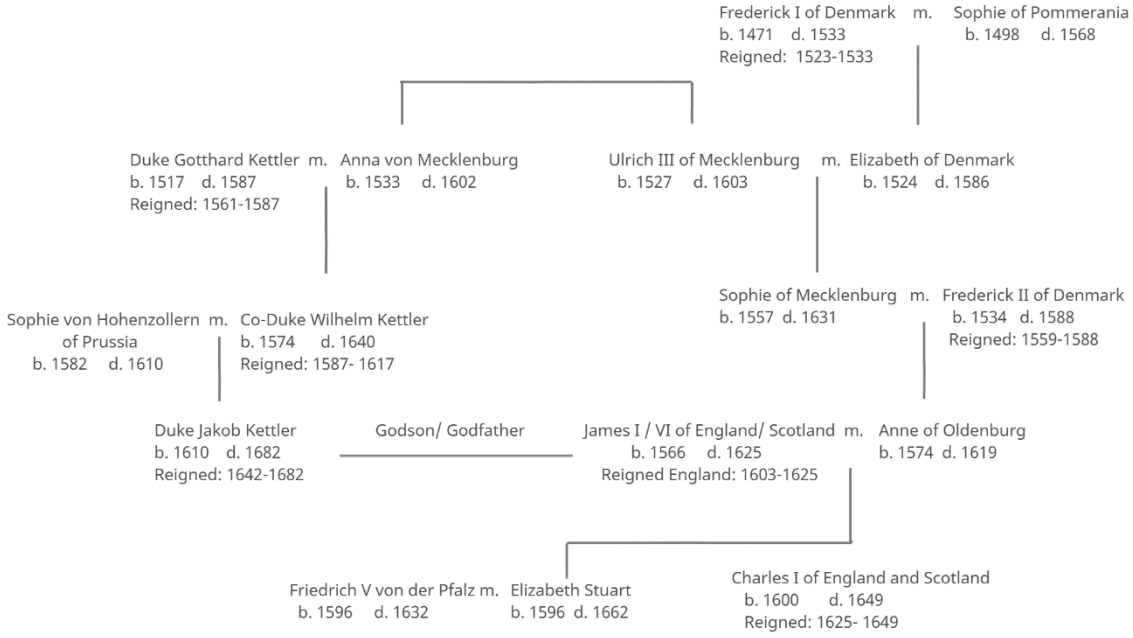


Figure 6: Further Kettler family connections.

[23] Keller, *Herzog Friedrich*, p. 126.
[24] Keller, 'Zu den Anfängen', (p. 260 and 262).
[25] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, pp. 434-435; von Mirbach, *Briefe aus und nach Kurland*, p. 14; Southorn, *The Gambia*, p. 76; Mijers, 'A Natural Partnership?', (p .248); van Heerwaarden, 'Tobago, Koerland en Rotterdam', (p. 192).
[26] Yevstratyev, 'Chronological Dating', (pp. 38-39).

Association with England and Scotland did have other uses. Knowing that in England there were concerned observers of the various Swedish-Polish conflicts in the seventeenth-century, Wilhelm attempted to lobby the English statesman, Robert Cecil, to exert diplomatic pressure on Sweden, to prevent an invasion of Mitau.[27] The deal was sweetened with a gift of falcons. On 9 April 1615, Friedrich wrote to James for the first time, explaining the tensions between Wilhelm, the Couronian nobility, and King Zygmunt. On 7 September 1615, Wilhelm related the case against him. Despite his previous warmth, James did little to address the issue directly. In his reply, James instead chose to thank Wilhelm for yet another delivery of falcons.[28] However, in 1618 Couronian lobbying persuaded James to discuss the matter of the dukedom's status with Zygmunt, urging the Commonwealth's ruler to respect Kettler autonomy.[29] During the reign of Charles I, Friedrich and Wilhelm doubled down on their contact with their potential high-status advocate. As a consequence, Thomas Roe, England's ambassador in Warsaw from 1629-1630, argued in favour of clearing Wilhelm's name to reinstate Jakob to the succession.[30] The cause found success in 1633, when Władysław agreed to recognise Jakob as heir.

Courland's ties with England were impressive but only part of the reason why Jakob's succession had been accepted by the Polish-Lithuanian monarchy. The unwillingness of the *Sejm,* the Commonwealth's own parliament of nobles, to bestow any more power on the Polish-Lithuanian monarch was also significant. England was not the only supporter that the Kettler brothers had found. Despite his exile, Wilhelm boasted impressive connections with Gustav II Adolf in Sweden, his in-laws in Brandenburg-Prussia, and the ducal family of his mother in Mecklenburg, where he spent his exile. All these connections boosted the cause, alongside supporters from the French, Pomeranian, and Lithuanian elite, most notably the Radziwiłł family, into which Friedrich and Wilhelm's sister, Anna, had married in 1586.[31] It is notable that many of these connections were formed because of marriage alliances and the influence of female members of the Kettler family.

Fully aware of how foreign allies had helped to prolong the existence of the Duchy, it seems that Jakob's elders had set him the task of gaining even more foreign allies by sending him to Western Europe in 1634, which according to Eckert included Duke Friedrich Wilhelm and Jules Mazarin.[32]

Neutrality, Openness, and the Search for Trade

Upon succeeding his uncle, Jakob sought to continue his work in foreign affairs. A key tenant of this approach was to emphasise Courland's neutrality. Like Friedrich before him, Jakob recognised the

[27] Keller, 'Zu den Anfängen', (p. 261).
[28] Ibid., (p. 266).
[29] Keller, *Herzog Friedrich*, p. 115.
[30] Ibid., p. 129.
[31] Jakovļeva, 'Statehood on the Territory of Latvia', (p. 272).
[32] Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*, p. 47.

irreparable harm that local war could reap on his duchy. On 4 June 1647, Jakob reached an agreement with Queen Kristina, setting the expectations should Sweden again war with Courland's protector. Both Swedish and Polish-Lithuanian forces were to refrain from incursions into Couronian territory. Additionally, Courland was to deny any sort of military service to the Commonwealth, including the sale of war goods or the use of resources and agents. No Pole or Lithuanian was to serve as a commander in the Couronian army, only those native to Courland.[33] The treaty, therefore, enforced a particular Couronian character to armed service. At a time when foreign soldiers and commanders regularly populated Baltic armies, the Swedish agreement asserted an identity of self-reliance on the duchy.

During Jakob's first decade as ruler, he made efforts to further this image of neutrality on a broad scale. Firstly, Jakob became a prince of the Holy Roman Empire in 1645. Whilst Jakob was not integrated into the Empire like the Dukes of Prussia had been, he did gain greater recognition as a German, rather than a Polish-Lithuanian, ruler. In 1651 and 1652/3, the Couronian Chancellor Melchior von Völkersam mediated between Sweden and the Commonwealth. There is little indication as to how Sweden and Poland regarded the presence of a Polish-Lithuanian vassal as a mediator, however, Courland's role is a gauge of its growing prominence on the continental stage. As the dukes had significant agency to create treaties and trade, the strong connection between Courland and Poland-Lithuania was masked to outside observers.

The assertion of an independent identity was a useful tool in Jakob's dealings across the continent. Jakob's relations with the descendants of his godfather continued with the duke's provision of military supplies to Charles I. In 1645 and in the midst of the English Civil War, Georg Fircks sent a letter from Paris to London, informing the English court that 'the Duke of Courland, my master, feeling himself extremely obliged to their Majesties of Great Britain, as soon as he saw them involved in open war with their subjects, formed the design of offering them all the assistance in his power [and…] as many men and ships as he can supply'.[34] Through the efforts of the Scottish ambassador John Cochran, the duchy delivered powder, musket balls, ships, and lead for the royalist cause, presumably in an attempt to further their standing with the Stuarts and gain favour at some future juncture. The relationship underwent many hiccoughs, due, in part, to the effectiveness of the parliamentary blockade and the unreliability of the factor, Albrecht von Low, in completing the deliveries.[35] The venture ultimately concluded badly, as Cochran started extorting money from his

[33] 'Concessio Neutralitatis Perpetuae a Regina Sveciae Christina Data Duci Iacobo d. 4 Iunii 1647' in *Saats Recht,* ed. Ziegenhorn, 205-206.
[34] Morland Simpson and Seraphim, 'Civil War Papers', (p. 152).
[35] Ibid., (p. 153 and 165).

monarchy as it began to lose the war. Nevertheless, a desperate Prince Charles still declared on 18/28 May 1650, that he 'shall not cease to be indebted to you for the assistance you gave'.[36]

To the east, Duke Jakob sought to use trade to form new diplomatic connections. In association with merchants in Hamburg and Danzig, who had tried a similar scheme with the Duke of Holstein, Duke Jakob attempted to contact Tsar Alexei of Muscovy and Shah Abbas II of Persia with the intention of connecting silk to Europe.[37] Jakob desired first purchase on a 'stein' of silk at a discounted price of 100,000 thalers and the ability to purchase 400 bails in Moscow for 128,000 florins.[38] Jakob thus launched a charm offensive on the juvenile Alexei and his boyars, offering a myriad of perks. These included horses, military aid against the Tatars, and diplomatic services. Jakob even offered to negotiate a prestigious marriage for Alexei in the Holy Roman Empire.[39] The plan was particularly bold as Courland had never maintained diplomatic relations with either Muscovy or Persia. The significance is shown by the fact that von Völkersam, holder of the second-highest office in the duchy, was tasked with leading the dialogue. The failure of this project was indicative of the challenges Jakob faced in promoting himself abroad. In 1646, after a concerning Russian silence, Johann von der Recke was turned away from entering Muscovy by soldiers, scuppering Jakob's attempt to send an in-person diplomatic mission. Word soon came to the Couronians that Alexei's chief advisor and advocate against the rights of foreign traders, Boris Morozov, had deemed Courland's status too lowly to allow them such consular privileges.[40] Relations between Alexei and Jakob were only to commence on 17 June 1655 when Alexei sought to keep Courland out of his war with Poland-Lithuania, whilst also attempting to gain concessions for shipbuilding in Windau. The matter of silk was never revived.

The Duchy of Courland found more success to the south-west of Europe with the trade treaties with France and Portugal on 30 December 1643 and on 12 February 1648, respectively. Courland's negotiator in Paris, Georg Firks, achieved lower tolls in French ports and unobstructed commerce under the Couronian flag. Courland were to provide similar treatment should French vessels arrive in either Windau or Libau. In return for this amicability, the French negotiators set the condition that Couronian traders were not to sell ships to any enemy of France, nor were they to bring commodities bought in France to enemy ports. Courlanders were permitted to trade with the enemies of France if they did so in neutral ports; the treaty named Hamburg and Danzig as examples.[41] The agreement shows the degree of neutrality that was deemed acceptable for an agreement in France. Couronian

[36] Ibid., (p. 200).
[37] Mattiesen, 'Die Versuche'.
[38] Ibid., (p. 546 and 555).
[39] Ibid., (p. 548).
[40] Ibid., (p. 554).
[41] 'Traité due Commerce entre Louis XIV, Roy de France, et le Duc Jaques de Courlande, fait à Paris le 30 Decembre 1643' in *Staats Recht*, ed. Ziegenhorn, 202-203.

ships were permitted freedom due to their status and because of their flag, but they were not permitted neutrality if it meant trading with France's enemies. The denial of the sale of ships ensured that Couronian vessels were partial in terms of which goods they were able to offer at different ports.

The Portuguese treaty decreed that Courland should be allowed access to all Portuguese ports in Europe subject to the usual tolls, and that Couronian trading ships would not be treated with any sort of hostility and aggression. These rights were given in return for timber, hemp, rope, tar and warships.[42] In keeping with traditional Lusitanian attitudes, the Portuguese king, João IV, denied freedom of commerce outside Europe. In February 1647, Georg Fircks, who had also led negotiations in Lisbon, argued that Courland, as a neutral polity, should be allowed access to Portuguese colonial ports. This was rejected because it would be 'embarrassing' to open Portuguese ports in Africa and the Americas to Courland alone.[43] In this instance Portugal rejected the principle of the neutral's right to freedom of the seas in the maritime space beyond Europe. Despite this agreement, there was space for Momber, to flesh out the deal struck by the diplomats. The factor corresponded with Jeronimo Nunes da Costa, a Portuguese Jewish merchant living in Amsterdam, who advised the Portuguese crown. The two organised a method for the duke to access the Portuguese colonial sphere. In May 1650, *Das Wappen von Kurland* was to sail for Portugal where the crown would rent it for 2500 Portuguese Ducats per month or 5000 Dutch Guilders, to ferry goods between Iberia and Brazil.[44] In 1652, three Couronian vessels transported slaves from Guinea to Brazil for the benefit of Portugal, with two thirds of the cargo reserved for the Portuguese crown.[45]

Despite the impressive concessions, the two treaties were diluted by the insistence that Courland be drawn into French and Portuguese rivalries. The fact that Courland could sell ships to France but not its enemies, suggests that Courland, were automatically expected to favour France during any of her conflicts. The Portuguese treaty included a similar caveat and additionally called for a 'strict alliance against Spain', a blatant *volte face* from any notions of Couronian neutrality.[46] Not only was neutrality rejected as a reason to trade in Brazil or Portuguese Guinea, but the agreement also insisted that Courland rescind that status regarding certain other countries. It seems that the Couronian officials were willing to make that sacrifice to secure trade with an influential partner. In principle the agreement aligned Courland in opposition to Spain. However, the Couronian desire to extend its trade, marks the duchy as duplicitous. Courland still acted as though neutral towards Spain and was willing to try numerous agreements with Spanish colonial interests. In 1651, Courland used the Polish diplomat to The Hague, Nicholas de Bye, to offer the Spanish ambassador 1,000 slaves a year to be

[42] Mattiesen, *Kolonial und Überseepolitik*, p. 70.
[43] 'peinlich'. ibid., p. 71.
[44] Contract between Hendrik Momber and Jeronimo Nunes da Costa, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 709, fols. 243-244.
[45] Mattiesen, *Kolonial und Überseepolitik*, pp. 242-243.
[46] 'striktes Bündnis gegen Spanien'. ibid., pp. 70-71.

delivered to Spain's various Caribbean colonies, and on 15 February 1656, the two polities signed a trade and security treaty which protected Couronian shipping in European waters.[47]

The Struggle to Avoid Conflict

During the early modern period, matters of naval neutrality and culpability were becoming increasingly complex. Previous political theorists had viewed neutrality with suspicion. The prevailing thoughts on war had previously been tethered to the moral argument that all military conflict must have a reason that is justifiable to God. It followed that any war would have a just and holy cause, and thus all had an obligation to support who they believed to be God's chosen champion. To remain aloof was to reject a righteous cause. By the early modern period, war had become a more utilitarian concept, justified by the need to gain power or commercial advantages. The new attitudes came to prominence through the reformation and secularisation in Europe which shifted moral authority in what a 'just war' constituted away from Rome.[48] Scholars such as Hugo Grotius and Albericio Gentili grappled with the idea that the notion of just war was hard to discern in this environment. In 1625, Grotius asserted that those who could not decide on the merits of war motivations, could justifiably call themselves exempt, provided they conformed to certain expectations.[49] Grotius was rather absolute on these requirements, suggesting that no neutral should give aid to a belligerent lest they be considered an enabler of a cause that was uncertain in its justification. Gentili, meanwhile, prohibited the trade of 'munitions of war and provisions.'[50]

Grotius' writings were particularly inspired by Dutch defiance towards the Treaty of Tordesillas, which in 1494 had announced the oceans as shared by the Spanish and Portuguese crowns.[51] Issues such as this treaty were contentious in the seventeenth century as arguments pushing for freedom of the seas clashed with the notion that ships could be valid targets for the growing number of privateers and prize courts, which accompanied declarations of war and trading monopolies. Grotius and thinkers of prominent trading polities such as the United Provinces and the Hanse, argued that non-participants in war had the right to trade without suspicion, known as the 'free ship, free goods' principle. This principle had been accepted in certain situations by the authorities of Denmark and

[47] Ibid., pp. 110-112; Andersons, *Senie Kurzemnieki Amerikā*, p. 106.
[48] Leos Müller, *Neutrality in World History* (London: Routledge, 2018), p.21; Philip C. Jessup and Francis Deák, *Neutrality: It's History, Economics and Law in Four Volumes: Volume 1, The Origins* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935), pp. 8-9.
[49] Hugo Grotius, *Hugo Grotius on the Law of War and Peace*, ed. Stephen Neff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 411.
[50] Ibid., and Albericio Gentili, *De Iure Belli Libri Tres. Vol 2, The Translation of the Edition of 1612 by Alberico Gentili*, ed. John C. Rolfe (Buffalo, NY: W.S. Hein, 1995), p. 49 a.
[51] Martine Julia van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle: Hugo Grotius, Natural Rights Theories and the Rise of Dutch Power in the East Indies, 1595-1615* (Leiden: Brill, 2006)

France by the 1670s.[52] Others, including Stuart England, argued that all ships were liable to be searched for war goods, especially if they came close to shore.[53] The concept of neutrality as a global standard had not crystallised enough for it to be universally recognised. Consequently, treaties were required to both establish neutrality between states, and define what that meant. The treatment of ships was therefore a constant negotiation, but if there were no treaties, there was likely to be no protection.

There are several examples of Couronian ships being taken by other polities, throughout the period of this study. For example, *Möwe*, *Orpheus*, *Rose* and *Islandfahrer* had all been taken by French privateers between 1672 and 1677. The *Salamander* was impounded in Newcastle in 1677 whilst the *Drei Heringe* was the subject of an English prize court case in 1665. The *Gektönte Eldend von Kurland* was captured by a Spanish warship in 1645 and *Blumentopf* fell victim to Algerian privateers in 1681. The First Anglo-Dutch war between 1652 and 1654 saw a period of frequent Couronian incarceration. During that period, the General States held the *Walfisch*, *Temperantia*, *Lux*, and *Invidia* whilst the English claimed the *Innocentia*, *Pietas*, *Leopard*, *and Luise Charlotte* and took *Temperatia* from the Dutch.[54]

It was the capture of the *Invidia* in August 1653, which provoked Duke Jakob into deploying diplomatic action in The Hague. Alongside Momber, who provided the compensation costs for the goods lost and crew salaries paid, Nicholas de Bye was charged with the *Invidia's* recovery. De Bye was the Polish ambassador to the States General, but he was willing to petition for others; he also sent reports to the Duke of Schleswig-Holstein. Whilst the duke often attempted to emphasise his independence internationally, he was aided by the use of his sovereign's representative in this instance. The Polish representative enabled Courland to use an ambassador and not just an envoy.

The task which de Bye was expected to perform was not just limited to recovering the *Invidia.* He also sent updates concerning matters of foreign affairs in the States General. Additionally, De Bye worked 'ceaselessly' to achieve 'the neutrality […] which His Highness desires to have accomplished'. The topic of neutrality featured heavily from at least November 1653, because of the ongoing struggle to reclaim the *Invidia*.[55] In that month, de Bye, having received no joy from the Admiralty of Amsterdam on the restitution of the *Invidia*, had travelled to Amsterdam to consult with them directly. There the admiralty advised that they would grant de Bye the safety of Couronian ships if an

[52] Carl J. Kulsrud, *Maritime neutrality to 1780* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1936), p. 132; Müller, *Neutrality in World History*, p. 64 and 86
[53] Müller, *Neutrality in World History*, p. 86.
[54] Berķis, *The Reign of Duke James*, p. 67.
[55] 'Ich werde nicht nachlaßen […] die Neutralitet dergestalt E.F.Dl. selbige begehren zuwege gebracht haben'. Letter from Nicholas de Bye to Duke Jakob, 16 December 1653, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 710a, fol. 100.

agreement of neutrality was finalised in The Hague beforehand.[56] The Admiralty cited the prior efforts of the Dukes of Holstein to achieve neutrality. De Bye would have known all about this matter as he had written in a letter of 21 June 1653 to Duke Jakob:

> 'His Highness of Schleswig Holstein, who is also my noble prince and lord, committed me to resume with the ambassador in England, touching the freedom of commerce and neutrality of the sea, just as much for the fisherman of all his islands, as for the ship's captains' [57]

We see in this case that Duke Friedrich III of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorf also encountered problems protecting his ships based on freedom of the seas. The freedom of the seas argument was a maxim frequently employed in Dutch complaints against the Treaty of Tordesillas. As we can see, smaller polities had found it apt to recycle this doctrine in their dealings with the United Provinces. It appears that the Dutch authorities were willing to accept such rights for neutrals, but they had to be asserted formally, rather than be assumed.

In the case of Courland, however, de Bye was willing to alter his tactics and suggest a confrontational approach. He advised that Courland should not only respond to the Dutch with their own shipping philosophy, but also give their admiralty a taste of their own medicine. In his letters of 29 December 1653 and 9 January 1654, de Bye argued that the port authorities of Windau and Libau should capture some of the many Dutch ships which often frequented Couronian waters. De Bye pointed out that Sweden was using such a policy as a measure against Swedish weapons ending up in Danish hands via Dutch trading.[58] The suggestion was not representative of Jakob's general handling of diplomatic incidents; it stemmed instead from de Bye's personal frustrations. De Bye professed his annoyance at having to make himself 'mousy' in the board of the Admiralty, to 'exaggerate the injustice'.[59] De Bye's new approach, by contrast, announced Courland as a duchy that could hold its own and fight back against crimes committed against it. The image corresponded with the greater presence Courland attempted to command on the global scene through trade and colonialism. Yet the plan was only partially successful. The General States responded sluggishly to Couronian pleas to recognise its neutrality. By 5 June 1654, Duke Jakob was still arguing the case for the *Invidia's* restitution to the mayors of Amsterdam, stressing 'we have never had a single participant [in the Anglo-Dutch War] in

[56] Letter from Nicholas de Bye to Duke Jakob, ibid., fol. 93,
[57] 'E.F.D. zu Schleßwyg Holstein mein auch genädiger furst und Herr auff mich begehren die ich ehist die Ambassade in Engeland solle fortsetzen, berühend meisntheills die freyheit der commercien, und neutralitet zur See so woll für die Fischer aller seiner insulen wie auch Schiffer zu obtinieren,'. Letter from Nicholas de Bye to Duke Jakob, 21 June 1653, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 710a, fol. 81.
[58] Letters from Nicholas de Bye to Duke Jakob, 29 December 1653 and 9 January 1654, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 710a, fol. 102 and 108.
[59] Ibid.

our ship or wares'.[60] Later that year, the *Invidia* was sold, much to the duke's disgust; there is record of Jakob demanding compensation for the ship as late as 17 August 1677.[61]

Official separation from the Anglo-Dutch War from the English side was also slow. As a result of lobbying from Jan Bretislaw Mislik, and Rudolf von Strauch to Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protector made a declaration on 28 August 1654. Cromwell consented 'to grant Our Letters of Safeguard, Excemption [sic] and Neutrality in full and ample form', allowing Courland's subjects to 'live and act, without impeachment or molestation… both at Land and at Sea'.[62] The decree was quite the victory for the Duchy of Courland, considering the amount of aid Jakob gave to the Royalists during the English Civil War. Nevertheless, recognition in an official treaty with England only arrived in July 1657. The Duchy Courland was later included in the Anglo-Dutch peace Treaty of Westminster, however, this was only provided in July 1659, five years after the treaty was first made and one year before it expired.[63] A renegotiation was only achieved in 1667, after the Second Anglo-Dutch War had ended.[64]

The Diplomatic Handling of Potential Colonial Rivals

Duke Jakob was just as keen to avoid conflict and provocation beyond Europe as he was within. The desire to plant strongholds in the Caribbean and Senegambia was an even riskier investment than that of expansion into European trade. We have already seen how protectively Portugal handled access to its colonial ports. Rivalry between European powers across the globe was often violent. A Dutch colony on Tobago had already been erased by a Spanish assault in 1636 as part of the Eighty Years' War. The risks were made more acute by the fact that Jakob preferred initially to carry out his colonial ambitions alone, and without outside support and defensive resources.[65]

To mitigate any controversy over Couronian activity in the Caribbean, the dukes rooted their plans within a legal and cooperative framework. The duchy wished to emphasise how its claim on Tobago was derived from negotiation with the Earl of Warwick, who in the eyes of the English crown, had the legal and exclusive right to colonise the island. The '*Korte Deductie*', sent from Mitau for a Dutch audience in 1664, stressed the 'amicable arrangement with the Count of Warwick' which had seen the

[60] 'wir keinen einzigen Participanten an unseren schiffen und wahren [iemall] gehabt'. Letter from Duke Jakob to the Mayors of Amsterdam, 5 June 1654, NL-SAA: 5026, Archief van de Burgemeesters, inv. nr. 29, fol. 3.
[61] NL-HaNa: 1.01.02 Staten Generaal, inv. nr. 4848, fol. 209v.
[62] Spekke, *History of Latvia*, p. 252.
[63] Inclusions in the Treaty of Westminster of the Duke of Courland, 20/30 July 1659, NL-HaNA 1.01.02, Staten Generaal, inv. nr. 12589.83, fol. 11-13.
[64] Request of the Duke of Courland for inclusion in the peace treaty between England and the NetherIndas, 1667, Archiv der Hansestadt Lübeck, 1.1-3.4 ASA Externa Batavica, 1210.
[65] Arie Boomert, 'The Earliest Dutch Fortifications of Tobago' in *Archaeology and Anthropology: Journal of the Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology* 16:1 (2009), 31-43 (p. 35).

island come into the Courlanders' possession.[66] Similarly, a letter from the Couronian envoy to the King of England on 13 March 1687 stated that 'Duke Jacobus (whose Godfather was King James) bought the island of the Earl of Warwick'.[67]

The settlers of St Andreas likewise negotiated a lease of the territory with the Mansa of Barra. They also attempted to ensure security from their potential European rivals. One curiosity of the Couronian colonial approach is that the agents of the duke were instructed to ask permission to colonise from other polities. Puttkammer's journey to the United Provinces in October 1651 sought to obtain the blessing of the States General to settle in Africa. Having received only the most non-committal of replies, Jakob was forced to send his ships to Africa without concrete Dutch endorsement.[68] For the most part, the failure to obtain approval from the States General did not affect the fort until 1658. However, the WIC were fiercely protective if Courland were seen to be intruding elsewhere in the continent. For instance, the Dutch fortress of Elmina briefly detained the *Walfisch* on 9 March 1652 as the vessel contained Dutch crew. Mollens was also turned away by the Dutch at Gorée on a separate journey. The episode prompted Jakob to complain to the States General that the WIC were not permitted to halt foreign vessels from their trade in Africa.[69] In a similar incident of Spring 1659, the *Pietas* was captured by Elmina for collecting slaves in what was a WIC zone of influence. The loss of *Pietas* remained uncompensated until the 1670s.

Diplomacy on the Ground

The actions of the WIC are a good example of how non-governmental institutions could lead European relations and diplomacy in different settings. Colonial governors as well as the people under their jurisdiction also played a significant role. For Courland, this influence was often disruptive. The presence on Tobago of the Lampsins' colony placed Duke Jakob in direct competition with foreign rivals. Tension was unavoidable as each side possessed irreconcilable claims.

The greatest controversy revolved around whether the Couronain or the Zeeland party had arrived first. The Couronian story was rehearsed and regurgitated abroad, after Tobago had been lost. The argument followed a near-identical narrative in each instance, ranging from the '*Korte Deductie*' of 1668 to John Lucas Lyon and Abraham Marin's appeals to Charles II in the 1670s and 80s.[70] Another

[66] 'ambiable compositie van de Heer Grave van Warwijck' and 'amiable composition de Mr. le Comte de Warwyk', Anon, *Korte Deductie by dewelcke Klaerlijk Werdt Betoont dat het Eyland van Tobago Gelegen in America Toebehoort aen Sijn Hoog Vorstelijcke Doorluchtigheyt Jacobus tot Lijflant in Courlant Semgallen Hertogh: Ende dat de Possessie, dewlcke de Heeren Lambsins op het Geseyde Eylandt Pretendeeren, geen Fondament en Heeft* (Mitau: Michiel Carnali, 1668), p. 3

[67] Historical Society of Trinidad and Tobago, 'An Impartial Account', p. 2.

[68] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 40.

[69] Nicolas de Bye to the State General, 11 February 1653, NL-HaNA, Staten Generaal 1.01.02, inv. nr. 7314.

[70] Anon, *Korte Deductie*; The Historical Society of Trinidad and Tobago, 'John Lucas Lyon, Agent of the Duke of Courland, to the King', quoted from TNA: Public Record Office C.O. 30. Originally written 7 April 1673, *http://library2.nalis.gov.tt/gsdl/collect/hist3/index/assoc/HASH07b9.dir/doc.pdf* [Accessed 3 May 2019];

pamphlet of 1668 described the incident in which the Dutch Governor Becquard encountered the Couronian settlement and 'claimed that he had a prior settlement in Tobago and had put three people there as evidence of his claim'.[71] According to the Courlanders, their settlement had met the three Dutchmen 'five leagues from Fort Jacobus' and learned that they were hostages for 'Indians and could not therefore claim to have acquired any right to this territory'.[72] The Lampsins side maintained that Becquard had deposited a rather more substantial group of men on the island, who then started to construct Lampsinsstad. A further 50 men were sent to St Eustatius to source more inhabitants for the new colony, during which time the Courlanders arrived and spuriously claimed the island as their own.[73]

The dispute caused a skirmish about which we have little information, as it is unclear whether there was any violence or whether Mollens' larger garrison simply cowed the Lampsins colony into submission. Afterwards, Becquard was required to pay tribute to the Duke of Courland to maintain his presence on Tobago.[74] The events of 1654 represent one of the only times that Jakob's representatives were forced to engage with colonial competition militarily. The immediacy of the issue on Tobago, required confrontation and negotiation outside of Jakob's diplomatic strategy. Consequently, the danger of violence increased by necessity. Yet Mollens did not seek to expel his rivals, despite his aim to control the territory in its entirety. The guiding principle of his ducal patron was still present but the relationship between the two colonies was more attached to the enmity of rivalry than Jakob intended in his colonial dealings with other Europeans.

Advocates of the Dutch colony engaged with this relationship of rivalry. Charles de Rochefort, a protestant pastor from Rotterdam worked with the Lampsins to preach to French-speakers in the Caribbean. His account of Tobago, published in 1665, is practically an advertisement for the Dutch settlement, describing in detail a productive and secure colony.[75] Conversely, he hardly mentions the Courlanders, whose influence he wished to downplay. An anonymous letter, distributed in the United Provinces in 1658, painted the Couronian colony extremely negatively. The writer claimed the colony lived in 'misery'. The 'twelve healthy men' who lived there feared leaving the confines of the fortress

'Brieve Deduction' sent by Abraham Marin to Charles II, 15 May 1680, TNA: SP 88/15, Secretaries of State: State Papers Foreign, Poland and Saxony, fols. 90–94.

[71] The Historical Society of Trinidad and Tobago, 'A Pamphlet Claiming the Unquestionable Right of the Duke of Courland to the Island of Tobago, 1668', *http://library2.nalis.gov.tt/gsdl/collect/hist3/index/assoc/HASH0154.dir/doc.pdf* [Accessed 3 May 2019], p.1.

[72] Ibid., p. 2.

[73] Menkman, 'Tobago', (p. 312).

[74] Ibid.

[75] Charles de Rochefort, *Le tableau de l'isle de Tabago, ou de la Nouvelle Oüalchre, l'une des isles Antilles de l'Amerique, dependante de la souveraineté des Hauts et Puissants Seigneurs les Estats Generaus des Provinces Unies des Pays-Bas* (Leiden: Jean le Carpentier, 1665). See also, Charles de Rochefort, *Beschreibung von Tabago: Einer Insul von denen Antilles, oder Caribischen Eylanden in America* (Hamburg: Thomas von Wiering, 1684); Boomert, et al., 'Archaeological-Historical Survey', (p. 250).

should they be 'be caught by the wild ones.'[76] These accounts attempted to encourage settlers to Lampsinsstad to the disadvantage of any other colony that might welcome colonists. They were an example of how Courland was locked into competition and formed as an enemy because of it. In the foreign perception it began Courland's disassociation with the concept of neutrality. It was a process in which the Duke of Courland and his agents adopted an active role.

The catalyst for further Couronian involvement in colonial competition was the failure of the duchy's policy of neutrality in the Baltic. Despite the duke and his council's best efforts, Courland's neighbours, in particular Sweden, found Courland's neutrality suspicious and frequently flouted it. Courland found itself defining neutrality, not by remaining separate but by balancing concessions. The Swedish army, for instance, was permitted rights of recruitment in Courland as well as a payment of 50,000 reichsthalers.[77] To Muscovy, Jakob gave supplies and military intelligence, even agreeing for his merchants to spread pro-Muscovite leaflets in Riga.[78] The makeshift version of neutrality came apart on 23 August 1658 when King Karl X Gustav of Sweden ordered Courland's invasion.

Jakob's imprisonment was an opportunity for the Lampsins to capitalise and expel their rivals. They informed their governor, Huijbert de Beveren, that the duke was out of the equation, enabling the Dutch colony to conclusively shift the balance of power. De Beveren successfully convinced several members of the garrison to instigate a violent uprising against their commander. From that point, Courland's foreign relations in the Caribbean were in the hands of the mutineers who agreed to concede the colony.

The rivalries that had bubbled under the surface came to the fore in the case of Africa too. The Amsterdam chamber of the WIC saw Jakob's absence as an opportunity to gain an advantage over other European powers in the area as well as the Groningen chamber. By obtaining Momber's endorsement for their takeover of St Andreas Island in February 1659, they could also expel the Couronian influence near to Elmina. It is even clearer that particular representatives of the English Royal Adventurers, who had obtained a royal charter to monopolise trade on the River Gambia in 1661, did not appreciate foreign activity there. Naturally, the charter precluded Couronian involvement on the Gambia and as a result, the duke's trading post became unwanted competition. In this situation neutrality was not possible, because the mere presence of Courlanders made them an

[76] 'miserie', '12 gesonde mannen' and 'van de Wilden gevat te worden'. Mattiesen, *Kolonial und Überseepolitik*, pp. 477-478.
[77] 'Die von Schwedische Seiten dem Herzog Jacobus Geschehene Proposition zur Unterwerfung an Schweden vom 26ten Febr. 1656' and 'Schreiben des Königs Carl Gustav an den Herzog Jacobus vom 1ten Junii 1657,' in *Staats Recht*, ed. Ziegenhorn, 228–229.
[78] Mārīte Jakovļeva, 'Die Beziehungen zwischen Herzog Jakob von Kurland und Russland' in *Forschungen zur Baltischen Geschichte* 2 (2007), 24-56 (p .34 and 45).

enemy. Admiral Robert Holmes, the leader of naval expedition intended to implement the charter by expelling Dutch influence from Africa, chose to interpret this royal privilege aggressively.

Having already ordered the Dutch from Gorée, Holmes turned his attention to St Andreas Island. Here he found, according to his testament 'some Dutchmen pretending to be the Duke of Courland's subjects'.[79] The people there were actually the last remnants of Otto Stiel's disease-hit garrison. The crew of Holmes' ship seems to have recognised Stiel's colony as Courlanders. In his diary entries, Holmes refers to his evictees as 'Courlanders' whilst his navigator, Colonel John Vermuyden, noted, 'this island heretofore St Andrew, and in the possession of the Courlander, who, upon demand, hath delivered it up to Captain Holmes'.[80] However, Holmes' task of ridding the African coast of hostile competition was not halted by this fact and he expelled the Couronian garrison, despite his brief only concerning the Dutch.

The actions of 'people on the spot' had disbanded Jakob's colonies when he was unable to construct a diplomatic response. At the end of the Second Northern War in 1660, ducal diplomacy was not in any way concerned with the survival of the colonies, but the survival of Courland itself, at stake during the Peace of Oliva. Whilst diplomacy could prolong Courland's survival, actions outside of diplomacy had illustrated starkly the weakness of the Couronian metropole. Jakob and Friedrich Casimir would attempt to win back their colonial influence in the same way that they had attempted to win it, through diplomacy, but their negotiating partners would be strongly influenced by the competition and conflict which had led people on the spot to damage Couronian power in the first place.

Colonial Rebuilding and Diplomatic Realignment

After the takeover of Courland's fortresses on Tobago and in the River Gambia, the need for foreign recognition became more acute. The Duke of Courland doubled down on diplomatic efforts, employing a discourse of legality and consent. As the two major rival claimants to Tobago and St Andreas (which later became James Island) other than Courland, the duke focused most of his effort upon the Dutch and the English. In May 1671, Pieter van Volkershoven was sent to The Hague to promote the legal cause for the restitution of Tobago. The case was sparked by the Lampsins refusal to acknowledge that they had to reimburse the Couronian soldiers they had sent back to Europe, and the colony which they had supposedly temporarily adopted in the duke's absence.[81] His efforts did not progress far as the Dutch courts were unreceptive to the ducal argument that Mollens arrived before Becquard and that his purchase from Warwick, trumped a lease given by the WIC to the Lampsins.

[79] Richard Lawrence Ollard, *Man of War: Sir Robert Holmes and the Restoration Navy* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1969), p. 69.
[80] Southorn, *The Gambia*, p. 86.
[81] Copy of a letter from the Duke of Courland to the States General, 28 May 1671 and copy of a letter from Elias Mittler and W. Quek, 10 July 1671, NL-HaNA, 1.13.06 Collectie de Jonge, inv. nr. 111, appendix 4 and 5.

A long line of envoys arrived in London in the period after Jakob's release. England was seen as particularly crucial, given that it controlled James Island and was the supposed source of justification for Courland's presence on Tobago. As time went by, the intense lobbying was justified by England being the only major power to offer the duke any glimmer of success. Couronian efforts did not begin well. One of the earliest representatives was Adolf Wolfrath of Rostock, who was recruited in 1662 with a special remit to regain colonial rights. His appointment annoyed the incumbent envoy, Philip Freher, who later labelled his colleague 'more of a letter-writer than an envoy- a lackey or other or low-born knave'.[82] Quite apart from Freher's resentment, Wolfrath experienced little luck in his work. His arrival in London was delayed when he was stopped by a Portuguese vessel and lost his papers.[83] Thereafter, he struggled to gain an audience with Charles II, the Duke of York or Prince Maurice, the main figures he had been appointed to see. When he did, his claims were quickly refuted. Wolfrath argued firstly, that Charles II had previously promised to repay Courland for their role in the English Civil War. Courland sought to reclaim that debt, yet Maurice claimed to know nothing of it.[84] Alongside the issue of the debt, Wolfrath promised, on 28 June 1662, that England would not lose their advantages in the Gambia if the Couronians were once again permitted ownership of their former fort.[85] Wolfrath implied that the duke wished once again to assert a Couronian dedication to free trade. Consequently, Wolfrath presented Courland as a benevolent power, who could in no way pose a threat to English trading power.

In this way, neutrality still formed a crucial part of the discourse justifying Courland's place in the colonial sphere. This characterisation formed a niche for Courland. S.J.J. Kleytjens theorised that Courland could have been treated as a placeholder to prevent Tobago's domination by one of England's more hostile rivals, who could disrupt lucrative plantations in Barbados. The French and English (later British) agreed not to colonise Tobago during much of the eighteenth century for this reason.[86] The treaty which Jakob eventually obtained in 1664 granting him Tobago, should not be viewed simply as a display of English goodwill, but instead within the context of tensions between the English and Dutch before their renewed conflict in 1665. In 1664, a Couronian Tobago may have seemed like an enticing prospect as it promised to be relatively harmless to England's ambitions and offered an opportunity to exclude the more antagonistic Dutch. This perceived harmlessness also led to Courland being awarded trade of up to 12,000 pounds per annum along the Gambia.[87] The typically protectionist English would not have tolerated such a presence otherwise. Yet this attitude towards

[82] Gray, *A History of The Gambia*, p.63.
[83] Ibid., p. 62.
[84] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 144.
[85] Gray, *A History of The Gambia*, p. 62.
[86] Kleytjens, 'De Koerlandse Kolonisatiepogingen', (p. 193).
[87] Treaty between Duke Jakob and Charles II, 17 November 1664, LVVA: 554, apr. 3, l. 6, fols. 81-83.

Courland had an expiry date set to the point when relations between England and the United Provinces became peaceful.

If Charles II or the Royal African Company (hereafter RAC) were in any doubt that the Couronian fleet lacked hostile potency, they need only have looked to the ease in which Sweden had invaded Courland to know that the duke was unable to prevent English trade through aggressive means. The recent invasion caused a ruinous loss of prestige.[88] English diplomacy was already considered slow. Foreign envoys visiting Cromwellian England frequently complained at how slowly access was granted to the Lord Protector and prominent figures of state. A fall of prestige would not have expediated this process. The type of frustrating wait experienced by Wolfrath and his many successors, seems to have persisted from the Cromwellian age into the Restoration government and may well have been extended by Courland's lowly position. As the historian of Sweden, Michael Roberts remarked, 'diplomats from unpopular countries such as Poland or Denmark, or from unimportant areas such as Courland or Gelders might wait literally months before they were so much as granted an audience.'[89] Having previously provided a trade for naval vessels, the duchy's military impotence in resisting a land invasion was clear for all to see. The duke and his diplomatic contacts were now confronted with the fact that Courland's existence was still hanging by a thread. This position may have been tolerable and inspired aid when Courland was offering a service to the English crown, as it was under Wilhelm and during the English Civil War. It was even tolerable when England was on the brink of war with the Dutch in 1664. However, now ducal colonial activities presented a clear hinderance to English colonial trade by contesting charters to the RAC. Moreover, the Duke of Courland could not be trusted to prevent interference from the Dutch due to the duchy's weaknesses and predilection for open trade.

The 1664 treaty was a rare victory, but it was problematic and fleeting. Further Couronian efforts in diplomacy were often ignored or mistrusted. There were two reasons for this situation. Firstly, neutrality and legal justifications were not adequately persuasive within a highly competitive environment which perceived trade in terms of enmity and struggle.[90] Secondly, Courland was insufficiently neutral and easy to dismiss.

As we have previously established, the Dutch and the English, whose authorities Jakob incessantly lobbied, considered the Courlanders as competitors. It was therefore not in their interests to favour the duke at the expense of their own subjects. The Royal Adventurers were strongly opposed to a fortress under a foreign power right in the middle of their zone of influence. They hence claimed that the Couronians were far from harmless. Retrospective English accounts of the takeover of St Andreas

[88] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 149.
[89] Michael Roberts, *Essays in Swedish History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1967), p. 145
[90] As articulated in John Shovlin, 'War and Peace: Trade, International Competition, and Political Economy' in *Mercantilism Reimagined*, eds. Stern and Wennerlind, 305-327.

repeatedly referred to Stiel's garrison as Dutch, backing Holmes' purposeful misinterpretation. In an unsigned memorial, Holmes is described as having taken the fort 'from ye Dutch' as the Duke had 'intrusted [the fort] in ye hands of a Dutchman [Momber], which Dutchman sold it to his countrymen ye States during ye disasters & exile which happened to ye Duke of Courland in 1656 [sic]'.[91] After an investigation by the Privy Council in May 1673 as to why Courlanders were unable to claim the trade granted to them in 1664, a representative of the RAC replied that Holmes 'found the Fort St Andrea in the Dutch possession'.[92]

The key to the RAC's decision to exclude the Courlanders, was business. In 1673, the company complained:

> 'the whole trade of the River of Gambia doth not take of Europe Commodities to the value of halfe twelve thousand Pounds …if the Duke of Curland hath Lib'ety to Trade for that sume yearly…the Royall Company must either desert the said Fort or maintain the Garrison without Trade.'[93]

To reinforce the argument, the RAC claimed that Courland was not an ally of the English. Momber's agreement with the Amsterdam WIC was the proof. The company claimed that Charles had been 'surprized' after 'it was found […] the Duke of Curland had First sold the Fort St Andrea to the Dutch', implying that no agreement would have been reached with this foreknowledge. Consequently, the Company concluded that 'the said Duke had noe just right to Trade under his Majesty's Fort'.[94] Similarly, the governors of Barbados frequently refused aid to Tobago, despite Charles' orders in 1680 to allow the Couronains to 'furnish themselves with what they may stand in need of'.[95] Governors Richard Dutton and Edwyn Stede provided short-term emergency supplies, but little more, as they worried that trading with the nearby colony would contravene the Navigations Acts.[96] As the interests of English companies were more closely intertwined with English authorities, it was easier for the metropole to support them than the leader of an insecure dukedom.

The Duke of Courland possessed little leverage in this environment, and because of this desperate situation, Couronian efforts deviated from neutrality. The crucial document in this process was the 17 November 1664 treaty between Jakob and Charles II. As the only significant breakthrough Couronian diplomats had received since the Swedish invasion, it formed the centre of all subsequent Couronian lobbying, long after further treaties had annulled it in British eyes.

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[91] Memorial concerning the claims of Nils von Staden, Couronian Envoy, undated, TNA: SP 88/11, Secretaries of State: State Papers Foreign, Hamburg and Hanse Towns, Sir William Swann, fol. 222.
[92] Letter from the Royal Africa Company to Sir Edward Walker, 22 May 1673, TNA: SP 88/15, Secretaries of State: State Papers Foreign, Poland and Saxony fols. 108-109.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Historical Society of Trinidad and Tobago, 'An Impartial Account, p. 4.
[96] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy*, p. 182.

Whilst Momber's contract was used as proof of Courland aligning with Dutch interests, the 1664 treaty is indicative of a Couronian alignment towards England. The document contradicted Courland's neutral status; for example, Courland was to furnish England with a warship in all conflicts excepting those against Poland. Additionally, Tobagonian wares were only to be traded in Courland, England, or Danzig.[97] Colonists could only be English or Couronian subjects. This stipulation was followed in the duchy's colonising plans with John Poyntz in the 1680s.[98]

The 1664 terms would have been restrictive, given the previous diversity of Couronain colonists.[99] Indeed, Courland did not always abide by these stipulations; Schmoll still recruited in Copenhagen and his helmsman, Jaan Waebes was Dutch. Yet Courland's recruitment and shipping patterns were altered. As Tobagonian land was advertised in London, colonial ships were increasingly outfitted in Newcastle, rather than in Amsterdam or Copenhagen. Tobago-bound vessels of the 1650s never visited the Tyne.[100] The new alignment was also a move away from the United Provinces. In 1670, Jakob instructed his governors, Robert Bennet and Johann de Lech, 'you shall not trust the Portuguese nor find shelter in their forts, much less so still in the Dutch harbours, so that no inconvenience can be caused. You can go to English harbours and also trade there'.[101] The States General were very concerned by this development. The Dutch ambassador to England, Lord van Gogh, complained to both England and Courland about their secret negotiations over the Gambia and Tobago.[102] In August 1664, George Downing, the British ambassador in The Hague, commented that the States General were 'againe allarmd that ye African Comp. are about buying ye Duke of Courland Fort'.[103]

English alignment persisted even to Duke Ferdinand's colonial negotiations with Rotterdammer merchants in 1699. Ferdinand insisted that the colony's protector should be the King of England.[104] At that time, William of Orange ruled England, so a Dutch association was not precluded. Indeed, draft plans anticipated that the new colony's trade would predominantly occur in the United Provinces.[105] However, some Couronian demands clearly originated from the 1664 treaty, including the promise

[97] Treaty between Duke Jakob and Charles II, 17 November 1664, LVVA: 554, apr. 3, l.6, fols. 81-83.
[98] Poyntz, *The Present Prospect* (1683), pp. 43-44.
[99] See chapter four.
[100] Jakovļeva, 'Jauns Avots' and Ships Accounts 1654-1668, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 837.
[101] Copy of the Instructions from Duke Jakob to Johann de Lech and Robert Bennet, given to the Duke's Accountant, Christoph Calau, 1 November 1670, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 2621, fol. 17.
[102] Ambassador van Gogh to the greffier of the States General, 8 August 1664, TNA: SP 84/171, Correspondence and papers of the Secretary of State: Holland, 113, fols. 239-240.
[103] Letter from George Downing to Henry Bennett from The Hague, 19/ 29 August 1664, TNA: SP 84/171, Correspondence and papers of the Secretary of State: Holland, 72, fol. 162.
[104] Suggestions from the Envoy of Courland, 30 October 1690, NL-RtGAR: 33-01 Handschriften Verzameling Rotterdam, inv. nr. 3226, fols .48-49; Menkman, 'Stukken Betrekkelijk het Eiland Tabago', (p. 87).
[105] Menkman, 'Stukken Betrekkelijk het Eiland Tabago', (p. 86).

that the newly formed company, despite its neutrality, would provide England with a ship in times of war.[106]

The 1664 treaty was a breakthrough, but it was an isolated moment derived from the context of European conflict. The Treaty of Breda on 31 July 1667, ended the Second Anglo-Dutch War and permitted the WIC to delegate the colonisation of Tobago. The duke had not been able to take advantage of his fleeting moment. The first ship to set off for Tobago after the Couronian mutiny departed in 1668. Nevertheless, the 1664 treaty was all the duke had and his agents adhered to it rigidly. For instance, Abraham Marin used it in 1680 to claim:

> '[t]he duke will bee satisfied since the treaty [of 1664] has not been as yet executed to reenter into the possession of the Forts [on the River Gambia] to maintaine at His own proper costs & charges the garrisons which shall bee needful to protect the ships trading thither'.[107]

In the Caribbean Couronian expeditions used the treaty as justification of their presence even to the most unreceptive audiences. Abel Tisso, the Dutch governor of Tobago reported his bemusement on 16 February 1669 when he encountered 'a ship of the Prince of Courland [which] came and set up on the site of the old fort […] they showed a donation letter for this whole country of Tobago from the King of England of the year 1664'.[108]

The 1664 treaty often meant that ducal agents turned to England if the duke wanted to launch colonial expeditions. The duke recognised that his Atlantic activities could be viewed poorly abroad. He therefore continued his policy of the 1650s by contacting other colonial powers, obtaining consent for colonial reestablishment. Occasionally this desire to gain foreign recognition obstructed the duke's ability to take advantage of favourable situations. The period between the French destruction of the Dutch fortification at Rockly Bay on 6 December 1677 and the Treaty of Nijmegen between France and the United Provinces on 10 August 1678, was considered crucial to Couronian ambitions on a now 'abandoned' Tobago. '[T]he said Duke hastens to take possession thereof, before the Peace between the French & Dutch be ratifyed, lest the former usurpers in case of longer delayes should prevent him', wrote envoy Nils von Staden to Charles II. Yet the Duke was still willing to wait for royal passports before sending his ships.[109] Eventually, the duke could wait no longer, informing Charles that he was 'dispatching 2 Vessells for the said Island' but again Jakob, 'humbly prayes

[106] Suggestions from the Envoy of Courland, 30 October 1690, NL-RtGAR: 33-01 Handschriften Verzameling Rotterdam, inv. nr. 3226, fols. 48-49.
[107] Memorial from Abraham Marin to the RAC, 29 September 1680, TNA: SP 88/15, Secretaries of State: State Papers Foreign, Poland and Saxony fol. 104v.
[108] 'is hier aan de coerzijde een schip gecomen van de vorst van Coerlandt ende alsoo de oude plaatse van 't fortt besett hadde […] Zij thoonden een donnatiebrief van den coninck van Engelandt van jaar 1664 van dit geheele landt Tabago'. Letter from Abel Tisso to the State of Zeeland, 16 March 1669, Zeeuws Archief, Middelburg, 2-2035.1 Staten van Zeeland, inv. nr. 120, fol. 1.
[109] Letter from Nils von Staden to Charles II, undated, TNA: SP 88/15, Secretaries of State: State Papers Foreign, Poland and Saxony, fol. 61.

Yo[ur] Ma[jesty] to grant your Royall Passports for the said Vessells'.[110] The English silence, which was maintained until Charles II was finally persuaded to offer Barbadian protection in 1680, also shows how much more reluctant the king was to involve himself when peace was imminent.

The dangers of not obtaining sufficient understanding over colonial activities is shown by the French capture of *Möwe*, *Rose*, *Orpheus*, and *Islandfahrer*. Three of these boats had been intended for Caribbean destinations when they were captured. The situation was worrying for the Kettlers as these actions marked the unravelling of the trading deal of 1643. France had argued for the inclusion of Courland in the Treaty of Oliva in 1660 and had aided Jakob in obtaining Swedish compensation.[111] It was also party to the treaties which determined the state of Tobago. Jakob and his representative in Paris, the Hanseatic envoy Johann Beck, were therefore keen to emphasise Couronian neutrality. In a letter of September 1677, the matter was placed very prominently at the beginning:

> 'He [The Duke of Courland] did not take part in the present wars [between France and the United Provinces] but observes an exact neutrality with the potentates of Europe, particularly those with whom Poland is at peace and in good understanding.'[112]

Interestingly, Beck highlighted Courland's association with Poland, usually omitted from the dukes' diplomatic correspondence to assert autonomy. The decision reflected Poland's improving relationship with France, reminding the French authorities that Courland was protected by the Commonwealth, and so actions against Courland would not be tolerated by Poland-Lithuania.

We know that a loss of prestige was not a deciding factor in France's aggression and its decision not to provide restitution. France had protected Couronian rights in 1660, when the duchy was at its weakest. Instead, the debacle with Friedrich Casimir's military service in the United Provinces had rendered Courland's claims of neutrality uncredible. In an undated missive to Louis XIV, Jakob was at pains to reiterate that Courland did 'not belong to the [Holy Roman] Emperor or to any other prince […] he [the duke] did not take part in this war for any of the princes and states committed to it'.[113] The duke further stated that his sons were not aligned to anybody but merely participated to obtain experience of warcraft.[114] Upon discovering Louis' displeasure, Jakob claimed to have recalled his sons.

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[110] Letter from the Envoy of the Duke of Courland to Charles II, undated, ibid., fols. 66-67.
[111] Instructions from Duke Jakob to Beck, 3 August 1677, LVVA: 554, apr.1, l. 685, fol.4.
[112] 'Il n'a point pris partir en la presente guerres mais observe exactement la Neutralité avec sous les Potentates de l'Europe particulierim ceux avec qui la Pologne est en paix et en bonne intelligence'. Memorial 'Au Roy' written by Johann Beck to King Louis XIV, September 1677, ibid., fol. 25.
[113] 'ne relèvent ni de l'Empereur, ni d'aucun autre Prince […] dans la présente guerre il n'a pris part pour aucun des Princes et Etats qui y sont engagés'. Von Klopmann, 'Abrégé', (p. 212).
[114] Memorial 'Au Roy' written by Johann Beck to King Louis XIV, September 1677, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 685, fol. 25v.

Jakob's forceful defence of his neutrality contrasted with his disassociation with the emotive issues of the war. Rather than being compelled by the causes of the war, Jakob portrayed his sons' participation as a chance to gain military experience. Perhaps perversely, Courland's neutrality was defined not through strict non-participation, but through a lack of identification with the justifications for war, which writers like Grotius and Gentili would have argued necessitated complete abstinence. Although Jakob seems to have regretted his sons' actions, his evasive measures to prevent them fighting were only implemented at the threat of diplomatic and commercial harm.

Jakob additionally protested that the 'Courland Regiment' consisted of few Courlanders. 'The regiment, which bears the name of Courland because of its late colonel, is composed of Prussians, Poles, Germans, Swedes and other nations, the smallest number are from Courland'. Sweden, Jakob asserted, did not suffer similar problems with its trade, despite the number of Swedes fighting against France, therefore he could not be expected to pay for the actions of only a handful of his subjects.[115] There is little reason to doubt Jakob's claim; in a memorial of 21 June 1672, the duke's clerk indicated that the regiments had been recruited between Courland and Hamburg. Yet the document also revealed that the decidedly unneutral Dutch noble, Baron van Amerongen, had also hired in Hamburg.[116] The Courland Regiment may have been ethnically diverse but so too were many armies and indeed, the duke's colonial expeditions, whose members originated from places such as Denmark, Norway, the United Provinces, and Scotland.[117] Such people represented the Duke of Courland despite their background, and thus the argument that the soldiers of the Courland Regiment were nothing to do with the Duke of Courland because they did not come from Courland, was a rather poor one.

Before Jakob had encountered the stumbling block of his sons' military *faux pas*, he had been seeking compensation. As the ducal diplomatic strategy rested on legal claims, Jakob saw that crimes committed against him could result in restitution in the form of colonial assets. In the French case, Jakob asked if Martinique could be exchanged for the four ships and the goods they carried.[118] However, with his prestige diminished and his worth to other powers unclear, the practice of holding Western Europeans to account by demanding Atlantic territories - for which their European claimants had fought hard - was unrealistic. In this case it was especially desperate given that Friedrich Casimir, and by extension the Duke of Courland, had violated the peace between Courland and France, thus forming Courland as one of France's colonial enemies.

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[115] 'Quant au régiment qui porte le nom de Courlande, à cause de son défunt colonel, il est composé de Prussiens, Polonais, Allemans, Suédois et d'autres nations, le plus petit nombre est de Courlande'. Von Klopmann, 'Abrégé', (pp.212-213).

[116] Letter from the Clerk of The Duke of Courland to the States General, 25 June 1672, NL-HaNA 1.01.02, Staten Generaal, inv. nr. 12579.98A, document 61.

[117] See chapters three and four.

[118] Berkis, *The Reign of Duke James in Courland,* p. 183.

Jakob's desire to collect Caribbean islands for compensation also reached Spain. In April 1675, Francis Parry, the English ambassador in Lisbon remarked that a ship came from Denmark carrying, 'a Danish Gentleman with his wife and family. The Gentleman immediately took post for Madrid; […] Tis said he is gone to Madrid about some public business and that returning hence he is to reside here under the Character of Resident or Envoy.'[119] Very soon Parry discovered what 'public business' the figure intended to pursue, when he returned to Lisbon and identified himself as Christoffer Hagedorn. Hagedorn revealed to Parry that he was following a personal debt owed by the King of Denmark for 20,000 ducats which he had been told to take from the money due to the Danish monarch from the King of Spain. He had also been recruited to follow up 'the payment of 100,000 Duckatts there owing to the s[ai]d Duke [of Courland] for the hire of ships lent to the Spaniard for the West Indies'.[120] According to evidence collected by Anderson, the complaints pertained to boats, including *Das Gekrönte Elend von Kurland*, taken in wartime off the coast of Flanders by the Spanish admiralty before 1645.[121]

Jakob's instructions to Hagedorn, sent on 13 August 1675, reveal that he did not desire monetary restitution. Instead, the duke suggested that the Spanish monarchy provide him with one of Spain's 'innumerable' American islands, namely Trinidad, which Courland would manage in the interests of Spain.[122] The idea was first suggested in 1652 when the duke instructed de Bye to ask the same of the Spanish envoy in the United Provinces, Antonio de Bruun. Jakob sent many envoys to deal with the issue, including van Volkershoven, his own representative in the United Provinces.[123] By the time Hagedorn arrived in Madrid, Jakob offered an annual payment of three hundred gold bars for possession of the island.[124] The duke promised that the Catholic colony would not be dismantled and he promised that a Couronian Trinidad would hold the island by the grace of the Spanish crown and would 'in no way' be subordinate 'to another foreign potentate'. The duke also offered free rein for Catholic settlers, which he noted was granted to them in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Holy Roman Empire, two polities with which Jakob claimed to be closely associated.[125] Jakob persisted in 1681 when he had three agents working on the same issue, Don Bartolomeo Quinzano,

[119] I have paraphrased the original quote: 'a Danish Gentleman with his wife and family. The Gentleman immediately tooke post for Madrid; […] Tis said he is gone to Madrid about some publick busynesse and that returning hence he is to reside here under the Character of Resident or Envoy.' Letter from Francis Parry to Joseph Williamson, 4/5 April 1674, TNA: SP 89/13, Secretaries of State: State Papers Foreign, Portugal, 38, fol. 71v.
[120] Letter from Francis Parry to Joseph Williamson, 11/21 May 1675, ibid., fol. 81v.
[121] Andersons, *Senie Kurzemnieki Amerikā*, p. 104.
[122] 'unzehlbare'. Instructions from Duke Jakob to Christoffer Hagedorn, 13 August 1675, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 724, fol. 1.
[123] Andersons, *Senie Kurzemnieki Amerikā*, pp. 104-105.
[124] Instructions from Duke Jakob to Christoffer Hagedorn, 13 August 1675, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 724, fol. 1v.
[125] 'dero Unter gehörige keines weges aber an einen anderen fremden Potentaten'. Instructions from Duke Jakob to Christoffer Hagedorn, 13 August 1675, ibid.

Don Juan Guillermo Chetelet, and Prince Ferdinand's tutor Johan Heinrich Ramelow, who succeeded in holding meetings with prominent Spanish figures but not in convincing them that the Lutheranism of the dukes would be unproblematic. Friedrich Casimir continued to employ Ramelow in Spain with an increased demand of 200,000 reichsthaler but Spanish stubbornness on the issue continued until Ramelow's poverty-stricken death in April 1684.[126]

It is interesting to note at the end of this analysis of Jakob's sustained lobbying of Western European rulers, that no such effort was undertaken by Friedrich Casimir. He did occasionally engage abroad on colonial issues, as his Tobagonian plans with Brandenburg-Prussia, and his continued employment of Ramelow indicate. Friedrich Casmir also sent Karl Johann von Blomberg to find Poyntz and to talk to King James II in 1686. However, these were scattered episodes in comparison to the constant diplomatic pressure Jakob attempted to exert. The matter was clearly not a key foreign policy issue for Friedrich Casimir and the constant stream of envoys, particularly to London, became a trickle under his rule. The reasons for this are likely because of Friedrich Casimir's lack of personal investment in the colonial project, as well as realism about the lack of progress diplomatic correspondence had achieved previously.

Conclusion

Foreign relations and interaction abroad formed a key influence on the duke's colonial activity. Diplomacy was a key part of the ducal strategy to obtain and hold onto colonies, as well as forming trading links. The dukes were encouraged to do so because of past successes in forming prestigious and powerful relationships, which had helped to preserve the dukedom against possible absorption into Poland-Lithuania. The meaningful effect of foreign relations was not unique to Courland as all colonial activities encountered a large degree of adjustment because of the attitudes of other powers. However, in the Couronian context, diplomacy was essential to all aspects of the duke's ability to obtain and maintain colonies, as well as the way in which Courland characterised itself in the Atlantic sphere.

Initial diplomatic correspondence served to announce Courland onto the trading scene, which meant offering Western European powers something beyond Dutch-controlled grain shipments. The primary products used for this purpose were ships, ship stock, and weaponry. As these deals were often concluded from a starting point of relative anonymity between the two partners, the envoys in this instance were initially chosen from a pool of powerful and loyal noble subjects. This lent prestige and state legitimacy to the deals being made. Trading deals, such as those made in Portugal and France in the 1640s, required factors to arrange the details and build commercial networks to capitalise on the agreements reached by diplomats.

[126] Andersons, *Senie Kurzemnieki Amerikā,* pp.250-252.

As well as establishing trading niches, the duke also wished to guarantee the goodwill of other colonisers. The strategy for obtaining this rested on a legal and diplomatic basis, whereby the Courlanders would seek deals and permissions to secure a safety net for colonial activities. The other strategy was neutrality which had been exported from Courland's experience fending off the expansionist aims of their Baltic neighbours. The emphasis upon neutrality highlighted Courland's supposed harmlessness to foreign colonial interests. Yet the neutral stance was not easily implemented. The duke's eagerness to jump at deals often required him to align on a particular side. For instance, Portuguese trade depended on enmity towards Spain and the 1664 treaty was tied to England's hostility with the United Provinces. The environment of colonial competition also caused foreign colonial companies to mistrust the Couronian interference in the Atlantic and block any colonial deals that the duke could make.

Courland also had a problem with prestige. After the invasion of Sweden, Courland's ability to present itself as a robust peacemaker fell apart. It also made it tremendously difficult to illicit any positive response when the duke protested the loss of the colonies. The losses had occurred through foreign relations conducted by people on the ground who had been thrust into greater agency because of the duke's absence. These included factors as well as soldiers and governors. After his restoration, the duke continued to seek diplomatic concessions, arguing based on the legality of his previous colonial arrangements. These mattered little in the face of colonial competition. Jakob clung to the only further legal agreement he received after his release, the treaty with Charles II, but this was only a temporary measure in royal eyes, and barely an issue for other European colonial interests who felt safe in ignoring it.

The Couronian network itself relied on many different people across Europe who brought together various areas of interest. Family relations of the Kettlers in strategic positions, most notably those of noblewomen, provided useful gateways into the Holy Roman Empire, Denmark, and the west of Europe. These were supplemented by the utilisation of more established channels, such as ambassadors and diplomats from Poland-Lithuania or the Hanse. Yet many ducal agents were not necessarily well joined themselves; Courland's most common type of envoy, were those employed in an *ad hoc* manner because of their own personal connections, but really had little to tie themselves to Courland and each other, apart from their ducal paymaster.

Chapter Three: Courland's Colonial Ships and Crews

As we have seen, diplomatic discourse and pamphleteering emphasised Couronian rights to Tobago, particularly deploying the argument that Mollens reached the island before Becquard. Another key pillar of the argument was the frequency in which the duke engaged with his colony. The 1668 pamphlet, entitled '*A Pamphlet Claiming the Unquestionable Right of the Duke of Courland to the Island of Tobago*' provided a full list of ships that had visited the Tobago colony before the mutiny of 1659. The ships' names were accompanied by the name of the expedition's leader, the cargo, and the passengers. The first of these had been *Das Wappen der Herzogin von Kurland* which arrived with 80 families and 120 soldiers on 20 May 1654 under 'Wilhelm Molleyn [Willem Mollens]'. 'Jean Brandt' followed with supplies in August 1655 before '*Constance* [*Constantia*]' reached Tobago on 4 September 1656 carrying Wolfert Brederode, who became temporary governor whilst Mollens reported back to Mitau. Peter Albertz and 130 additional people accompanied Brederode's expedition. Later in the year 'Andre Bohm' brought 120 people in '*La Paix*' [*Pax*]; *Dame*, captained by 'Nicola de Brieux' supplied 'provisions and munitions' in December the following year. Three further ships arrived in 1658 apparently carrying 150 people. The letter also mentions that Jelle Helles planned to cross the Atlantic with 100 people but did not proceed past Lübeck due to the capture of Duke Jakob.[1]

Abraham Marin mimicked the style of this letter in his correspondence with Charles II on 15 May 1680. He also used this deliberate formula of recording the vessels, captains, and cargoes sent to Tobago.[2] The importance of recording these journeys is clearly stated in the 1668 pamphlet which argued:

> 'This frequent communication, freely and peacefully undertaken by the Duke, shows that he had complete possession of the Island of Tobago and that the Messrs Lambsons pretensions have no foundation. Their allegation that one year after the settlement, the Duke sent out one large ship with people to begin planting, is clearly untrue'.[3]

The archives show that ducal agents articulated their master's colonial claims by emphasising transit and connectivity. The act of sailing across the Atlantic strengthened Courland's attachment to the Americas. It underlined the Couronian presence in the Atlantic rendering Courland's small influence in the Atlantic, Caribbean, and West African spaces more tangible. The ship was a symbol of Courland's ambition. The industrious impetus in Windau and Libau during the reigns of Jakob and Friedrich Casimir, allowed Courland to physically navigate colonial waters with increased frequency.

[1] The document often describes the people on board as 'families' whereas other sources indicate that they were individuals. Historical Society of Trinidad and Tobago. 'A Pamphlet', pp. 1-3; von Klopmann, 'Abrégé', pp. 198-199.
[2] 'Brieve Deduction' of Abraham Marin, Envoy of the Duke of Courland to the Court of Charles II, 15 May 1680. TNA: SP 88/15, Secretaries of State: State Papers Foreign, Poland and Saxony, fol. 92.
[3] Historical Society of Trinidad and Tobago. 'A Pamphlet', p. 3.

They also allowed the duke to enter the discussion of colonial power, either through connections with Atlantic outposts, or providing hired-out trade to other Atlantic polities.

The ship was a vehicle for networking. It connected nodes of ducal ambition and emphasised Couronian relevancy across European and Atlantic commerce. Through the investigation of Couronian ships' movements, we can record which geographical relationships and influences were most crucial to Couronian trade and self-improvement. The study of ships' crews enables us to trace the experience and backgrounds which informed Couronian colonial activities, also highlighting the non-Couronian nature of the duke's project. The concept of maritime movement helps us to avoid a static representation of Courland's colonies, rooted in the person of the duke in Mitau. This chapter emphasises the character of ducal expansion through an examination of those who conveyed that expansion.

The first section of this chapter will investigate Couronian shipping movement out of the Baltic in order to identify the trends of connectivity during the seventeenth century. Such an approach highlights the extent to which trade increased as well as the main ports with which Couronians were interacting, beyond their immediate Baltic locale. Using the data from the Sound Toll database, we can discover the background of Courland's ships' captains. The chapter will then focus on the captains and crews which sailed into the Atlantic, thus plotting the courses of maritime experience.

The Sound Toll and Courland's Connections in the Baltic and Beyond

The Sound Toll record is a vast and excellent resource for those studying the movement of Baltic trade, which can be found online. [4] The toll was collected by the Danish monarchy from 1497 to 1857 at Helsingør where the water between the island of Sjælland and the Scanian coast is at its narrowest point. The toll varied depending on the goods carried, but always included a base charge for use of the lighthouse. The documents give the name of the captain and their port of origin; the destination and departure port; any taxable goods; and the toll paid. In theory, the record allows one to track each ship registered as Couronian, as well as the route of each vessel visiting or departing the duchy.

The database has some shortcomings. The toll collectors did not regularly note the destination of a ship until the 1670s. Between 1637 and 1650, all foreign ships departing Courland sailed to unknown destinations, according to the Sound Toll.[5] By the 1650s and 1660s that figure fell to 69% and 72% of all foreign-led journeys, respectively.[6] By contrast, only 8% of destinations were unknown by the 1670s, decreasing to 2% in the 1680s.

[4] Sound Toll Registers Online. *www.soundtoll.nl*
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

For Couronian departures, there are ways of mitigating the effect of these unknown destinations. As many of the captains returned to Courland, patterns based on the port of destination of previous journeys. For example, if we follow the career of Hendrich Richter, we find this:

Name	Captain's Port of Origin	Port of Departure	Port of Destination	Date
Hendrick Richter	Libau	Libau	Unknown	09/05/1650
Hendrich Richter	Courland	Amsterdam	Unknown	09/07/1650
Hendrich Richter	Windau	Windau	Unknown	02/05/1651
Hendrich Richter	Courland	Amsterdam	Unknown	26/06/1651
Hendrich Richter	Courland	Windau	Unknown	26/07/1651
Hendrich Richter	Courland	Amsterdam	Unknown	05/09/1651
Hendrich Richter	Courland	Courland	Unknown	25/10/1651
Hendrich Richter	Courland	Amsterdam	Unknown	23/04/1652
Hendrich Ripter	Courland	Courland	Unknown	24/05/1652
Hendrich Richter	Courland	Amsterdam	Unknown	30/06/1652
Hendrich Richter	Courland	Courland	Unknown	25/08/1652
Hendrick Reher	Courland	Gothenburg	Unknown	01/12/1652
Hendrich Richter	Courland	Courland	Unknown	30/04/1653

Richter's activities were very regular; his trip to Gothenburg was the only time he sailed anywhere other than Courland or Amsterdam. Richter's stop in Gothenburg is connected to a 'Hendrick Reher', the furthest deviation in spelling from 'Hendrick Richter' and therefore the most uncertain entry associated with him. There were typically only one or two months between Richter's appearances in Helsingør so we may assume that Richter sailed direct to Amsterdam and back again. Where there is a gap between the dates, the picture is less clear. A gap between December 1652 and April 1653 may indicate that Richter was stuck in port until winter weather conditions improved. A longer gap outside of winter, for example between 25 August 1652 and 1 December 1652, is more difficult to explain. It cannot be known whether the record has missed a journey, whether Richter visited other ports before Gothenburg, or whether he simply stayed there for an extended duration. In this case one cannot remove the unknown destination. Where we can make assumptions, Richter's timeline becomes more complete:

Name	Captain's Port of Origin	Port of Departure	Port of Destination	Date
Hendrick Richter	Libau	Libau	Amsterdam	09/05/1650
Hendrich Richter	Courland	Amsterdam	Unknown	09/07/1650
Hendrich Richter	Windau	Windau	Amsterdam	02/05/1651
Hendrich Richter	Courland	Amsterdam	Windau	26/06/1651
Hendrich Richter	Courland	Windau	Amsterdam	26/07/1651
Hendrich Richter	Courland	Amsterdam	Courland	05/09/1651
Hendrich Richter	Courland	Courland	Unknown	25/10/1651
Hendrich Richter	Courland	Amsterdam	Courland	23/04/1652
Hendrich Ripter	Courland	Courland	Amsterdam	24/05/1652
Hendrich Richter	Courland	Amsterdam	Courland	30/06/1652
Hendrich Richter	Courland	Courland	Unknown	25/08/1652
Hendrick Reher	Courland	Gothenburg	Unknown	01/12/1652
Hendrich Richter	Courland	Courland	Unknown	30/04/1653

Carefully applying this method to all Couronian ships, 148 unknown entries can be removed. However, this still leaves 223 unknown destinations. As a result, one can only provide rough trends for the before the 1670s rather than accurate figures.

There are further minor problems of which to be aware when using the Sound Toll. For instance, there are journeys traceable in other sources which are absent from the toll records. 'Andress Bohm' appears in Helsingør on 10 November 1654 but there is no record of his voyage to Tobago in 1657. Likewise, the Sound Toll has Jacob Ross passing through on 9 October 1654 and 29 April 1656 but not in January 1655, when other sources mention him sailing to Tobago.[7] Absences in the record can sometimes be attributed to a breakdown in Danish recordkeeping during wartime. Elsewhere there are curious entries where boats travel to the same port or undertake journeys that do not involve sailing past Denmark. Foppe Siemansen of Ameland is one such example of a captain listed incorrectly as leaving Libau to sail to Libau.[8]

Despite the various potholes, the Sound Toll record provides a fascinating insight into the influences upon Couronian trade throughout the seventeenth century. The figures relating to foreign shipping to and from Courland reveal the complete dominance of Dutch-based trade and personnel. 494 journeys from Courland registered Amsterdam as their destination between 1637 and 1699, which is 68% of all

[7] Sound Toll Registers Online. www.soundtoll.nl; Anderson, '*Die Ausländische Kolonie Tobago'* in *Baltische Hefte* Vol. 8 No. 3 (April 1962), 129-155 (p. 138).
[8] Sound Toll Registers Online. *www.soundtoll.nl.*

known departures in that timeframe (See Figure 7).[9] The second most frequented port was 'Holland' with forty and then Newcastle-upon-Tyne with thirty-two visits. Half of all ships known to have sailed to Windau under a foreign captain, originated from Amsterdam, whilst for Libau the figure was 68%.[10] In total, 602 vessels are known to have arrived in Courland from Amsterdam between 1637 and 1699, far outstripping the next highest total, 39 ships from the Loire port of Le Pouliguen in France.[11]

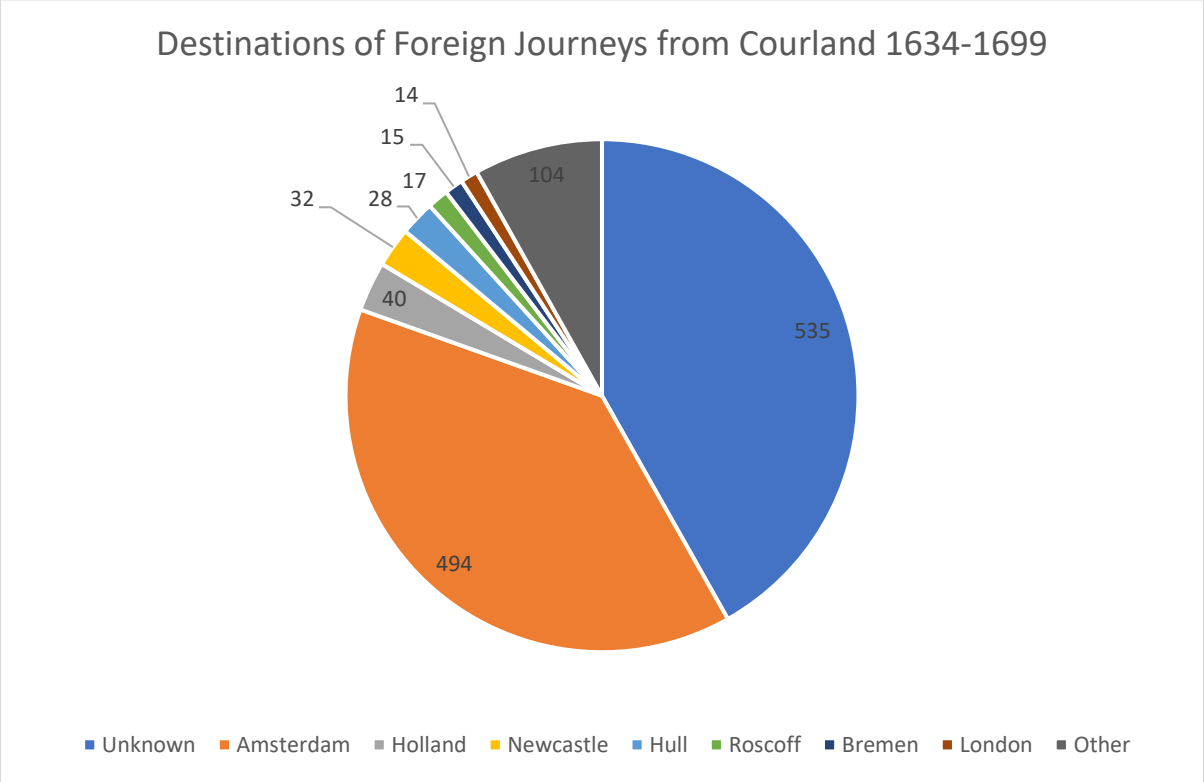


Figure 7: Destinations of Foreign Journeys from Courland 1634-1699.

The Dutch influence stands out further when one considers the affiliation of the captains travelling to Courland. Of the twenty most common ports of origin for captains sailing to Courland, fourteen were Dutch or Frisian. A quarter hailed from either Terschelling, Ameland, Vlieland, or Amsterdam. The same was true for boats departing Courland; the share for the four ports increased to 38% (See Figure 8). Change over time is more perceptible in ships leaving Courland than arriving given that many ships in the early to mid-seventeenth century have an unknown destination. Shipping from Courland reached its peak in the 1680s, coinciding with a peak of captains from Terschelling, Ameland, Vlieland, and Amsterdam. Captains from Lübeck, Hindeloopen and Stavoren rivalled the most

[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] If one also adds the ships originating from Le Croisic, 8 km away, the figure is forty-eight.

prominent Dutch cities and even surpassed them in the 1630s-1650s but not afterwards. The decline of Lübeck in the records after the 1650s is an indication of its waning fortunes as a central Baltic port.

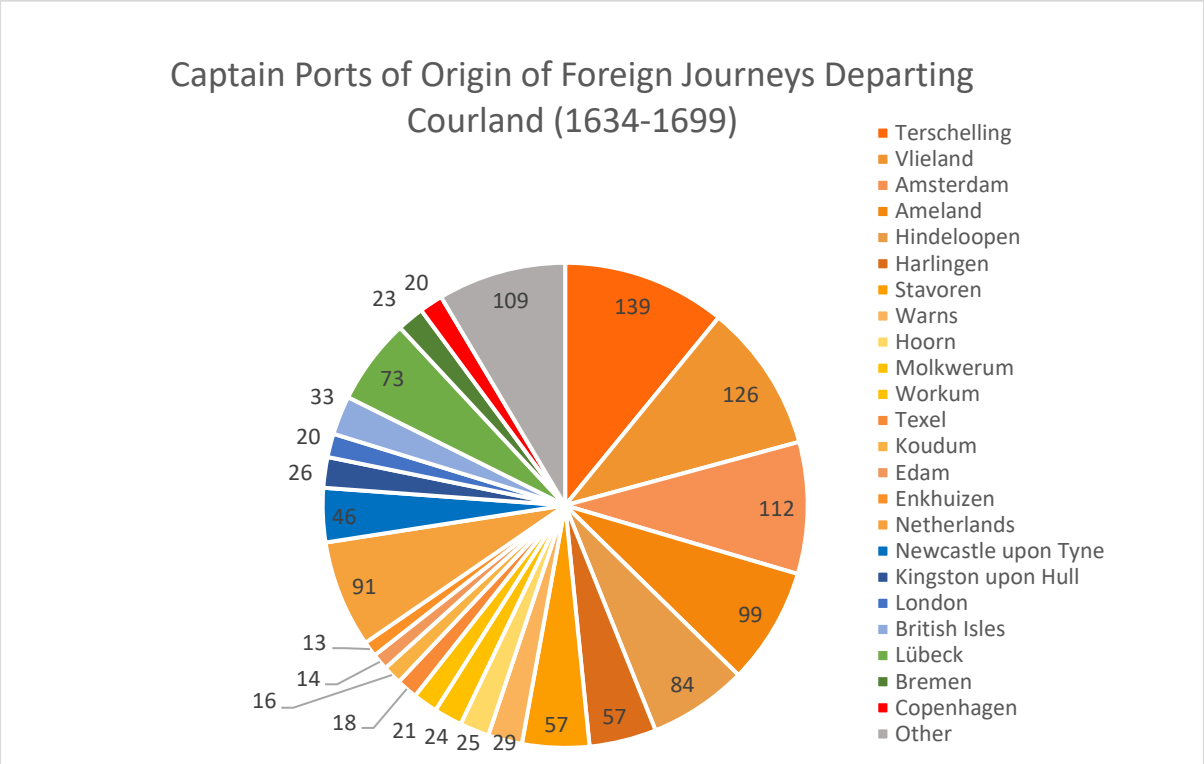


Figure 8: The Port of Origin of Captains Departing from Courland 1643-1699. Here the United Provinces is represented in orange, the British Isles in blue, the Germanic Hanseatic Cities (including those in Swedish territory like Rostock or Bremen), and red for Denmark-Norway.

Most interesting is the gradual emergence of captains from England. From the 1660s and 1670s there was a rise in the number of captains originating from Newcastle (the most prominent English port), Hull, London, and Bridlington.[12] The figures reflect the penetration of English trade into the Baltic and the slow growth of English maritime ascendancy over the Dutch after the Anglo-Dutch Wars. Another factor may be the strengthening of Couronian diplomatic efforts towards England. Nevertheless, English influence, in terms of foreign-based shipping, was not sustained and the sheer number of Dutch captains far outweighed any English presence (see Figure 9).

[12] Sound Toll Registers Online. *www.soundtoll.nl.*

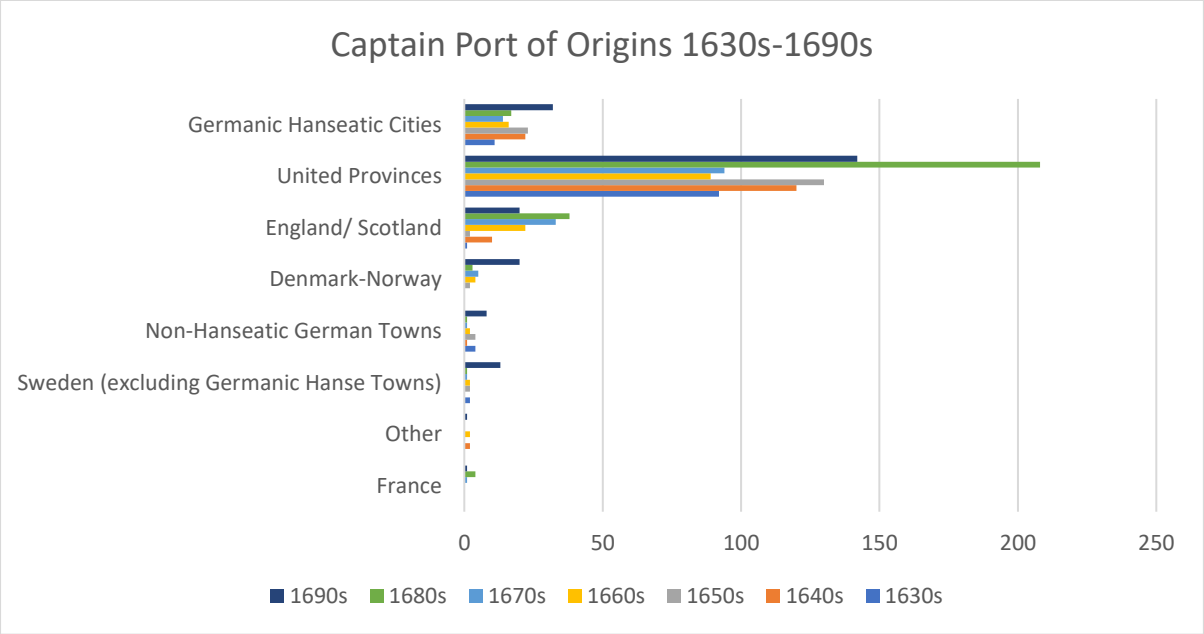


Figure 9: Change over time of foreign captains departing Courland.

The statistics relating to foreign shipping in Courland are an interesting counterpoint to data concerning Courland's own maritime activities. Many of these ships will have been ducal ships. Their movements are therefore indicative of the markets and the links the duke was willing to pursue. Couronian shipping data reflects the opinion, present in the historiography, that Duke Jakob and Friedrich Casimir's wanted to undercut the Dutch trading dominance observed in foreign shipping.[13]

Couronian shipping reached a peak in the 1650s, the decade of Jakob's so-called 'golden age'(see Figure 10).[14] Couronian captains undertook 808 journeys beyond the Baltic, 234 occurred during the 1650s. Before 1643, there had been minimal Couronian activity at Helsingør as it was in this year that the duke negotiated passage at the same rate as Sweden, Poland, and Brandenburg-Prussia.[15] From 1637 to 1643, only eight Couronian ships passed through the Sound. As a result of the agreement, Courland sent at least ten merchant ships through the Sound every year, with the exception of 1645 when the toll was disrupted by Swedish occupation of Scania. Between 1650 and 1657, the average number of Couronian vessels leaving and entering the Baltic annually was twenty-eight. The rise of these figures will have been facilitated by the trading and transit deals made in France (1643), Portugal (1648), and England (1653).

[13] Oberländer, 'Das Konzept der Frühen Neuzeit', (p. 31) and Mattiesen, 'Die Versuche', (p. 536).
[14] Merritt, 'The Colony of the Colonized', (p. 494).
[15] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, pp. 55-6.

Unsurprisingly, 1658 saw a significant dip in Couronian shipping; Sweden's invasion of Mitau notwithstanding, the Øresund had been disrupted by Sweden's war on Denmark. No Couronian ships were logged in 1659 and only one in 1660.[16] As the duchy struggled with its post-war recovery, the frequency of journeys only gradually gained momentum. Arguably Couronian shipping only recovered from 1676 when there were seventeen transits through the Øresund.[17] Even then the numbers did not touch those achieved in the 1650s. The 1680s was the busiest decade after the disaster of 1658, a result of Friedrich Casimir's promotion of Libau and the rush to recapture colonial trade in the years before Jakob's death.[18] Nevertheless, the final total of 158 journeys was only just over two thirds of the quantity completed in the 1650s.

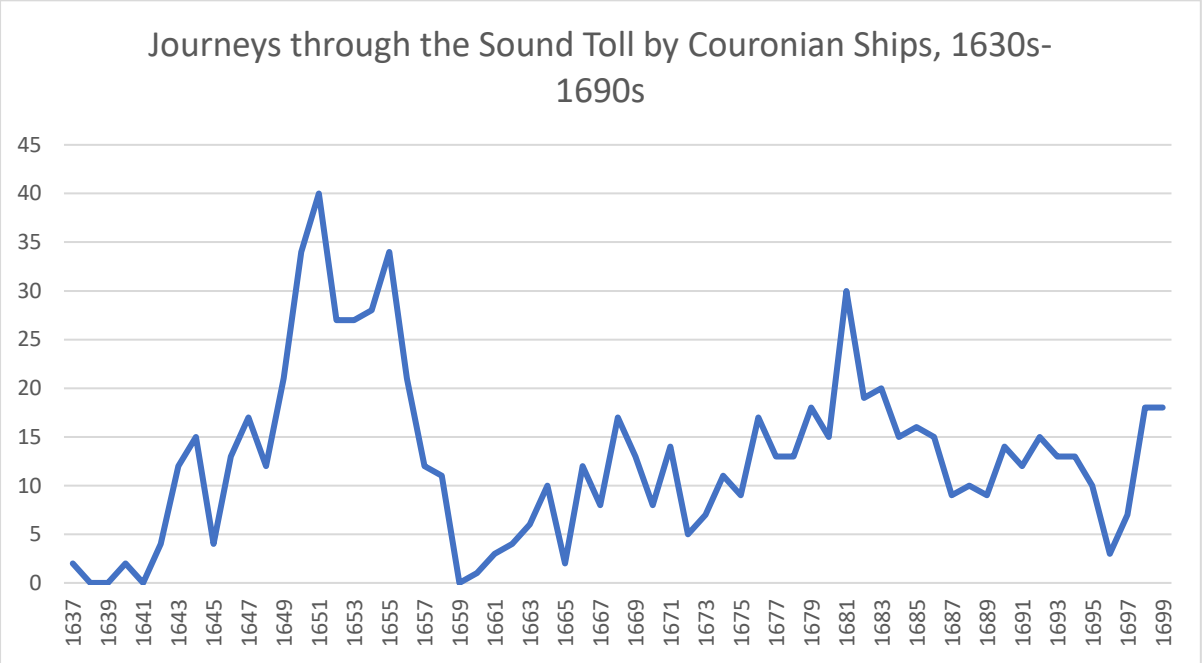


Figure 10: Couronian shipping through the Sound Toll, 1630s-1690s.

When discussing specific ports, it may be useful to reiterate some basic points. As the data was collected at Helsingør, journeys undertaken exclusively within the Baltic, for instance between Courland and Danzig, are absent. It is highly likely that ports like Danzig, Königsberg, Lübeck, and Riga were just as important to Courland as Amsterdam, Oldenburg, or Roscoff. Secondly, the dominant ports will clearly be those in Courland, in other words, Courland, Windau, Libau, and occasionally Kolken. I have mostly removed these from the statistics to portray the outward direction of Couronian shipping more clearly.

[16] Sound Toll Registers Online. *www.soundtoll.nl*.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Jakovļeva, 'Statehood on the Territory of Latvia', (p. 270).

For Couronian ships, Amsterdam was still the most frequent foreign port of destination and departure during the seventeenth century. However, the Dutch entrepôt did not dominate the schedules of Couronian captains quite as much as those of foreigners (see Figures 11, 12, and 13). If we subtract the Couronian ports and the unknowns, Amsterdam accounted for 32% of departures and 27% of destinations.[19] The prominence of Amsterdam's share of Couronian trade decreased as the reigns of Jakob and Friedrich Casimir progressed. In the 1640s, 63% of Couronian ships departed from Amsterdam. This percentage dropped to 44% in the 1650s before reaching a low point in the 1670s and 80s at 19% and 12%, respectively. There was then a rise in the 1690s as Amsterdam constituted 33% of departure ports for Courland's captains. [20] A near identical trend can be seen for destinations.

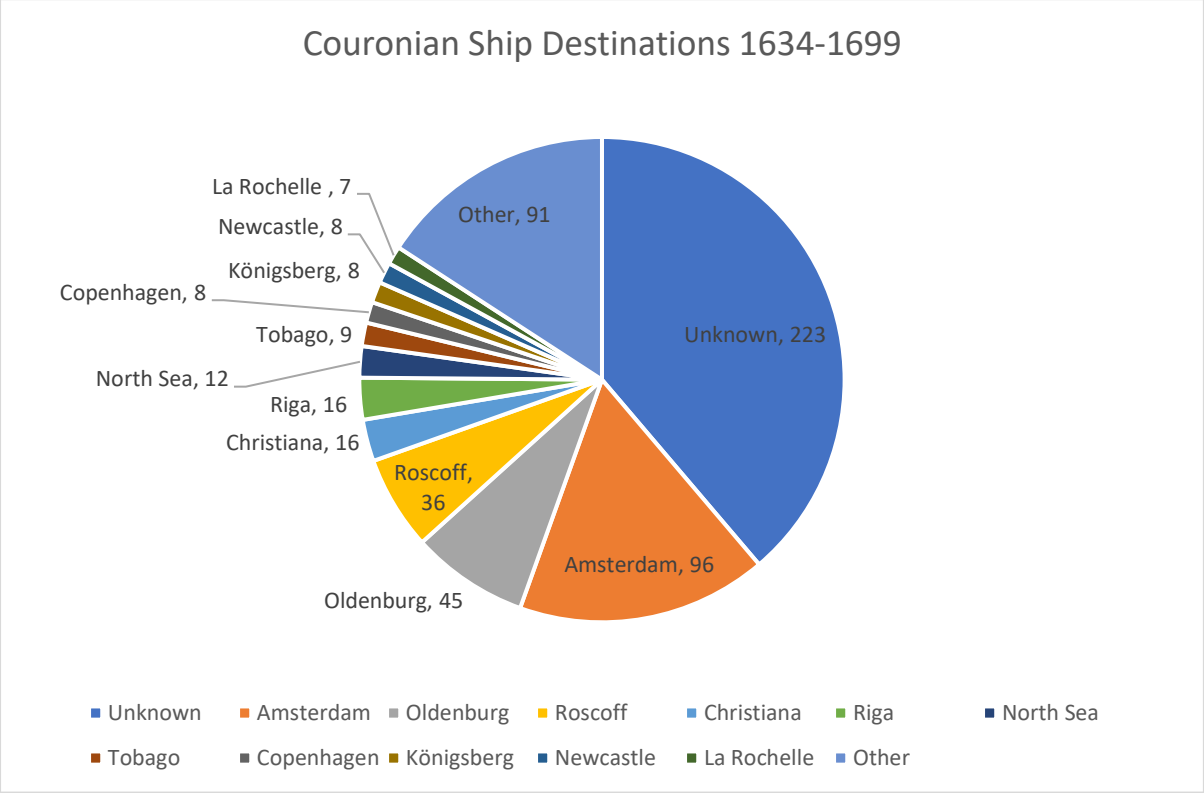


Figure 11: Destinations of Couronian ships, 1634-1699.

The threat of capture during the Anglo-Dutch Wars may have motivated some Couronian captains to avoid Amsterdam. The *Drei Heringe*, captured on 24 March 1665, is one example of a Couronian ship which the English admiralty detained on suspicion of trading in the United Provinces. The crew threw their papers over the side of the ship to disguise the fact, according to the ship captain's eleven-year-old son, Hindrick Brunning, that the vessel was destined for Rotterdam instead of Hamburg, as they

[19] Sound Toll Registers Online. *www.soundtoll.nl*.
[20] Ibid.

had claimed.[21] The bypassing of Amsterdam also points to a Couronian attempt to diversify the ports in which they traded, and there seems to have been a distrust of Dutch ports as a result of numerous factors. These include the capture of Couronian ships by the Amsterdam admiralty, the lack of concern that the States General had for the overthrow of the Couronian colony on Tobago, and England's prejudice set out in the 1664 treaty towards trading colonial goods outside of England, Courland, and Danzig.[22]

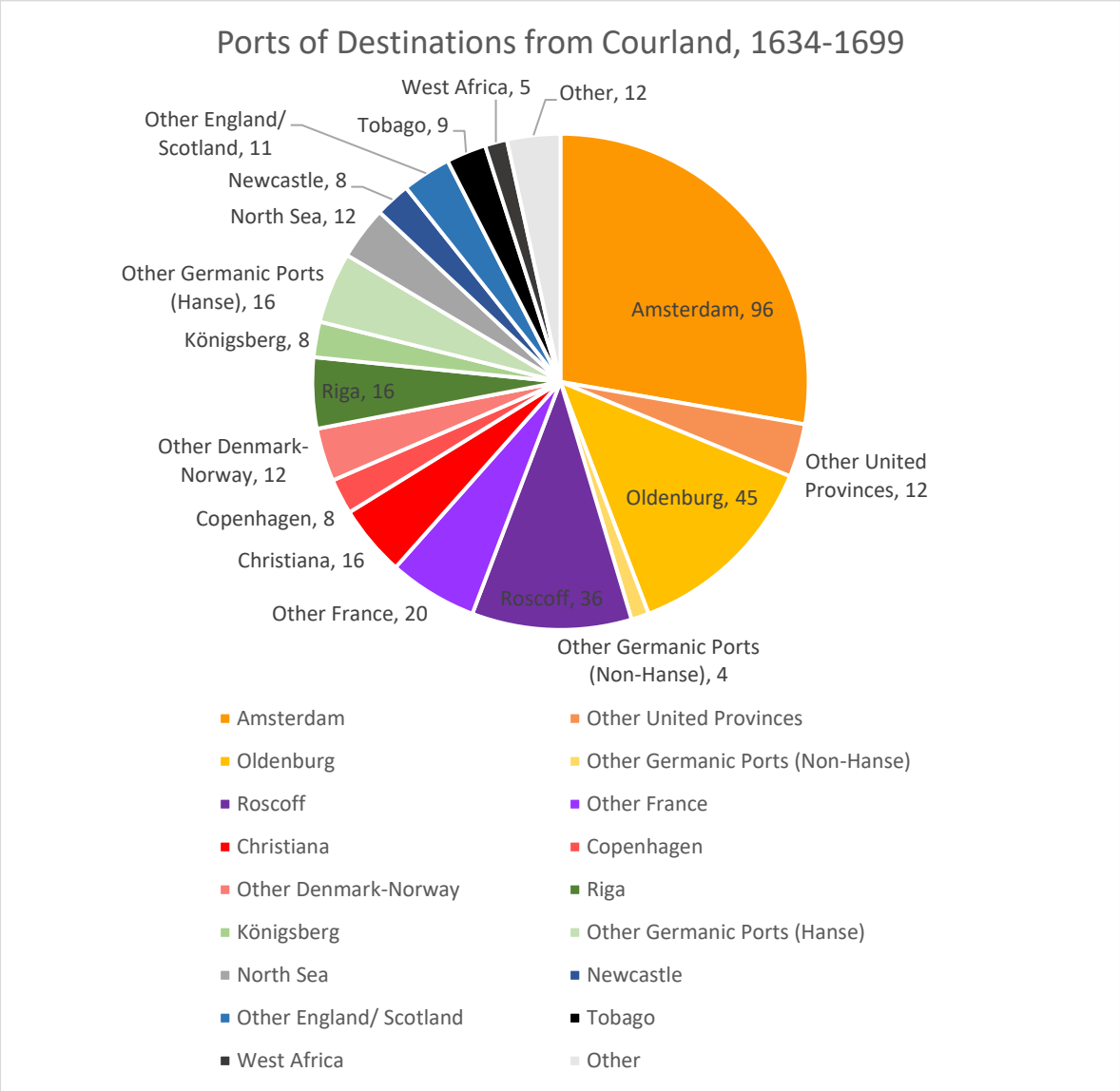


Figure 12: Destinations of Couronian ships, 1634-1699 without unknowns. Purple represents French ports, dark yellow represents Germanic non-Hanse ports and black represents extra-European ports.

[21] 'Three Herrings of Courland', TNA: HCA 32/10/119, Prize Papers of the English Admiralty.
[22] Treaty between Duke Jakob and Charles II, 17 November 1664. LVVA: 554, apr. 3, l .6, fols. 81-83.

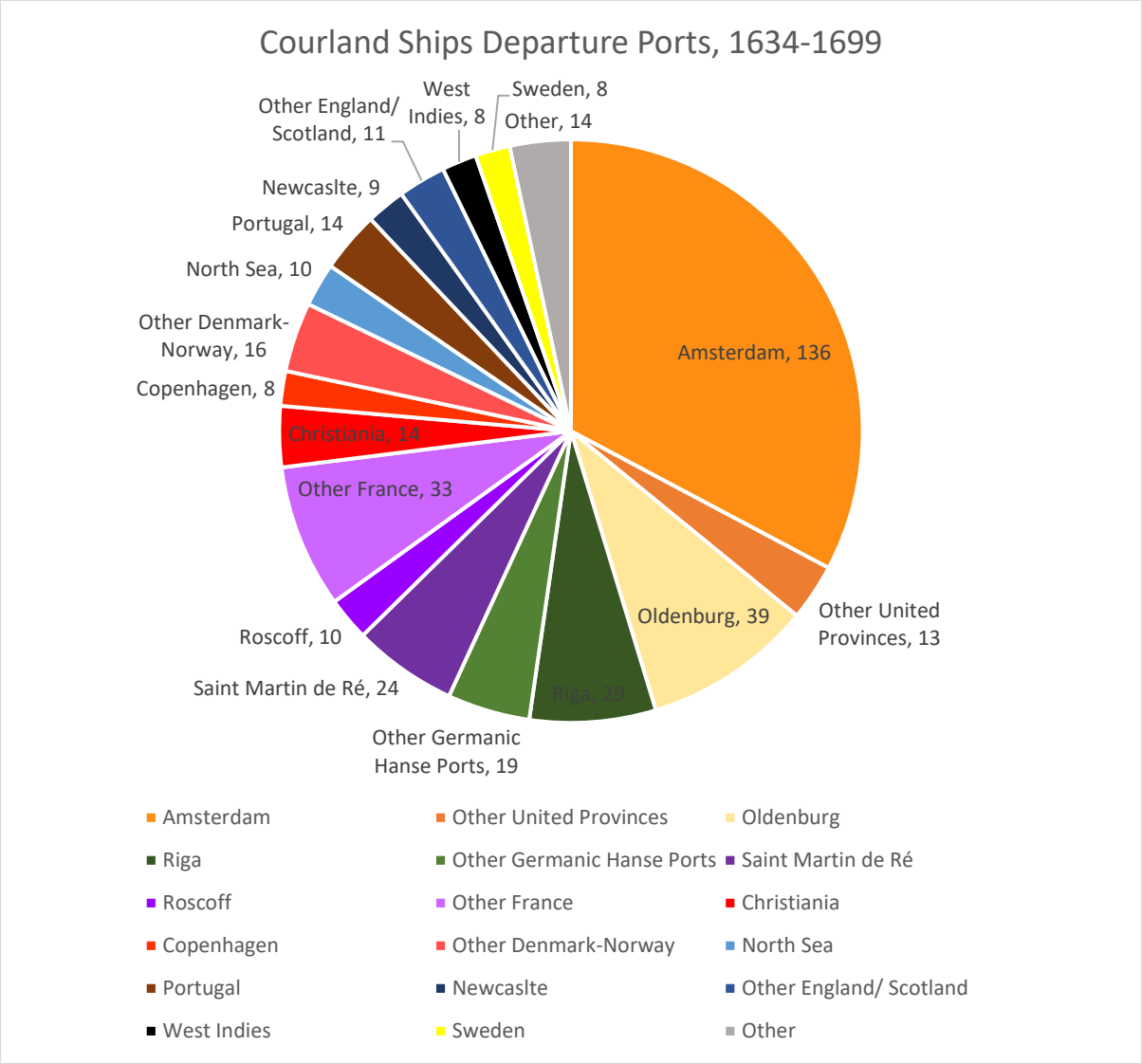


Figure 13: Ports of departure of Couronian ships to Courland, 1634-1699.

The 1670s and 1680s saw a significant rise in Couronian ships travelling to France. In the 1670s, nine vessels departed France and nine vessels arrived. In the 1680s, thirty-three Couronian captains set sail for France whilst twenty-nine travelled in the opposite direction.[23] The majority of those arriving did so in Roscoff (twenty-eight ships), whilst those departing mostly left from Saint Martin de Ré (thirteen), situated on an island west of La Rochelle. These ports were the most popular non-Couronian destinations for the duchy's captains in the 1680s. The main commodity on offer for

[23] Sound Toll Registers Online. *www.soundtoll.nl.*

Couronian captains was salt, which they sought from its source, instead of via Amsterdam.[24] Ginger, paper, and wine also featured. English, Scottish, and Portuguese ports experienced a rise in activity, but it was less dramatic than the French increase. Six vessels left from Lisbon and Setúbal in the 1690s. During the 1670s and 80s, destinations such as Newcastle, the Shetland Islands, and London were frequented with more regularity. Ports in the British Isles witnessed seven Couronian ships depart in the 1680s. However, the activity was far less intense compared to English and Scottish captains travelling to Courland, and it would be tenuous to link this trend to the realignment of Courland's colonial diplomacy.[25]

Oldenburg also gained remarkable Couronian traffic during the 1670s, 80s, and 90s, rising to a position comparable to Amsterdam. Almost one quarter of ships in the 1690s were destined for Oldenburg. The timing of Oldenburg's frequent appearance in the record is curious given that its wealth and influence fell after 1667 when plague and then a fire in 1676 diminished the city's importance.[26] However, it appears shipping Couronian grain to Oldenburg was far more important than any goods which captains could carry; most ships had only ballast to declare on the way back from Oldenburg.[27]

The last destination to mention is Christiana. Christiana experienced its heaviest Couronian traffic in the middle of the seventeenth century. Nine Couronian vessels departed for southern Norway in the 1660s, with three additionally travelling to Drammen and Fredrikstad. Seven ships were registered as departing Oslo and Fredrikstad in the same decade. The interest in Norway was because of iron, especially after King Frederick III granted iron mines in Flekkerøy and Eidsvoll in 1664.[28] The ships to Christiana waned as Couronian interest in Norwegian iron waned, particularly after the lease of the mines to the Dukes of Courland expired in 1681.[29]

The patterns of European shipping portrays the changes in Couronian interests and relations (see Figures 14 and 15). Whilst foreign shipping in Courland and the Baltic was dominated by Dutch ports, ships originating in Courland visited more diverse locations, showing the ducal desire to break Dutch trading control. Trade deals beyond Amsterdam increased the regularity of shipments to the Britain Isles, Portugal and, in particular France, whilst trade in Norway followed ducal interest in iron. Trade in Oldenburg appears to have been instigated to provide aid to the German city.

[24] Ibid.
[25] Sound Toll Registers Online. *www.soundtoll.nl*.
[26] Gustav Rüthning, 'Die Pest in Oldenburg' in *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Herzogtums Oldenburg*, ed. Oldenburger Verein für Altertumskunde und Landesgeschichte, Vol.13 (1905), pp.103-120.
[27] Sound Toll Registers Online. www.soundtoll.nl.
[28] Treaty between Duke Jakob and Frederick III of Denmark, 13 May 1664. LVVA: 554, apr. 2, l. 3146, f. 1
[29] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland,* p. 173.

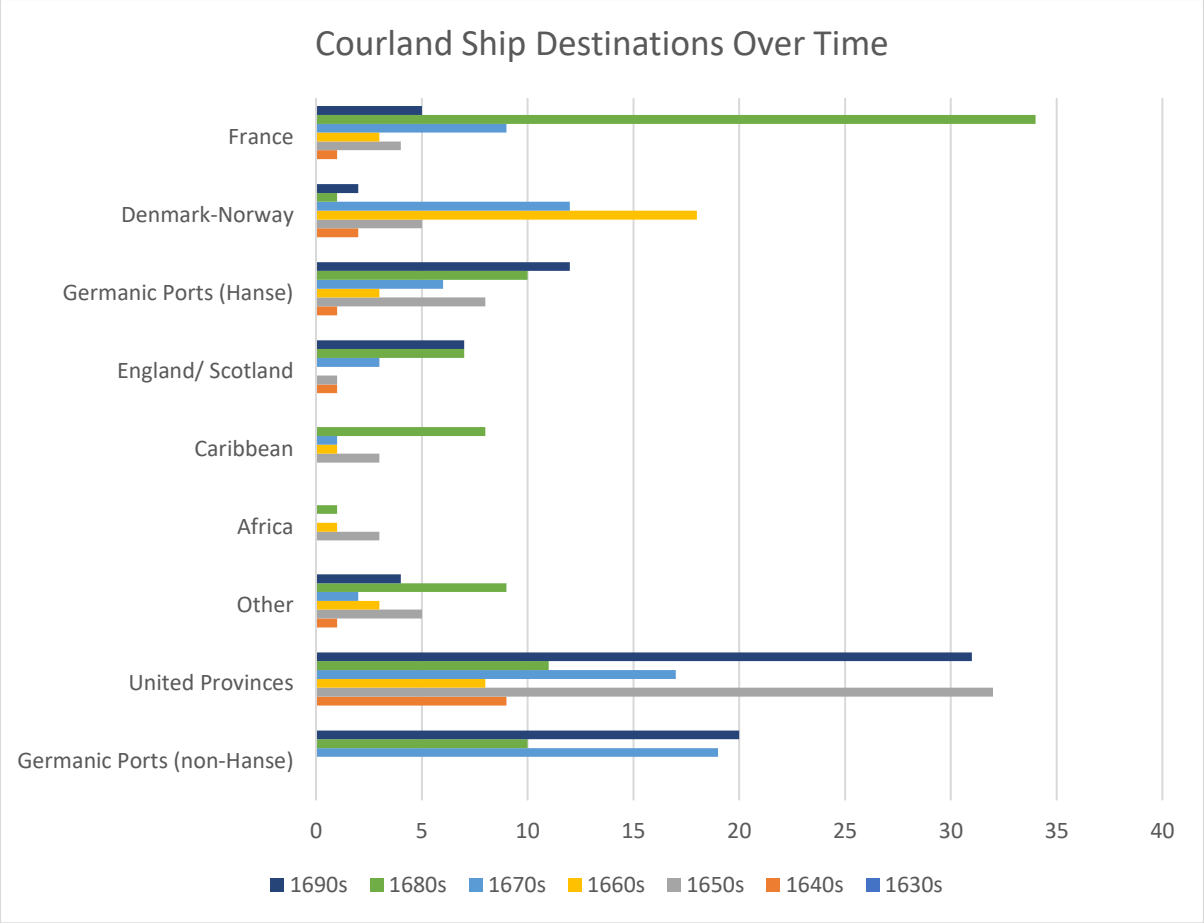


Figure 14: Destinations of Couronian ships over time, 1630s-1690s.

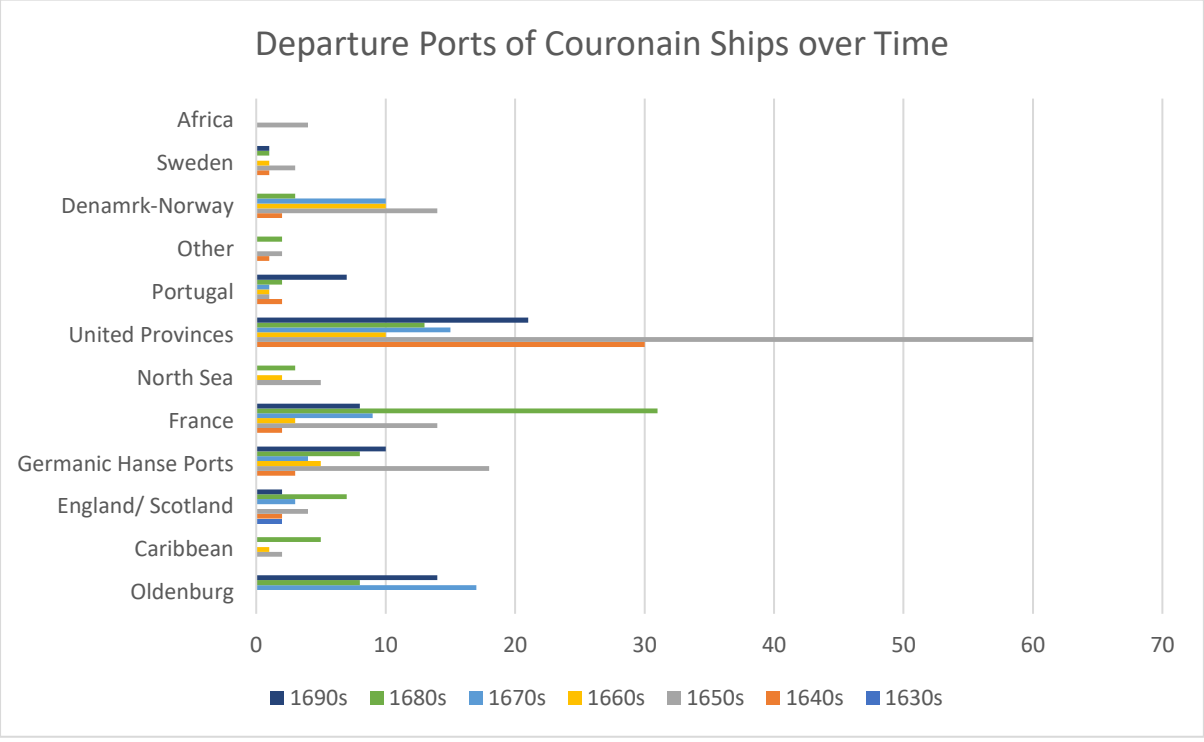


Figure 15: Departure ports of Couronian ships over time, 1630s-1690s

Couronian Captains

The Sound Toll also offers the opportunity to track the activities of particular captains. As we have seen, captains like Heinrich Richter followed regimented routes. Others, such as those that reached Africa, the West Indies, or Mediterranean ports like Genoa, experienced very varied trips.[30]

Identifying individual captains is sometimes challenging. In the early modern period, names were seldom written uniformly and often followed the phonetic logic of the language the writer spoke. For example, one can find 'Johan Rubrick', 'Johann Rubech', 'Johan Rubeick', 'Johann Røbech,' and 'Jan Rubeck'.[31] Piecing together a detailed picture often requires making assumptions about whether shipping routes or career lengths seem feasible. For example, one can differentiate between the similarly named 'Petter Rytter' and 'Peter Lorrens Riuter' because Riuter travelled through the Sound from Libau to Oldenburg on 11 March 1693, passing Rytter who travelled from Oldenburg to Windau on the same day.[32] Alternatively, it would seem unlikely that the Piter Frederichss who left Courland and arrived in Helsingør on 2 July 1655 was the same Peter Frederichss who travelled from Amsterdam to Libau on 16 November 1681 because the two voyages are very far apart.[33]

It is even more challenging to determine whether a captain was a native Courlander or had arrived from elsewhere. Conclusions cannot be made about a person's origin based on name alone, especially when the names in the record are so variable. However, studying the background of Courland's captains is a worthwhile endeavour. As part of Duke Jakob's attempts to increase production and trade, a number of foreign experts arrived in Courland, enhancing such sectors as shipbuilding and ironworking.[34] The situation was no different for the sea captains. Using care, one can suggest where Couronain captains may have previously worked by finding where their names have been registered in different ports and seeing if the journeys fit.

Sometimes, Couronian captains were registered at non-Couronian ports during their time working in the duchy. Peter Hellesen and Rens Dirchssen were both listed as sailors of Copenhagen, the former as he travelled between Windau and Newcastle on 1 January 1677, the latter sailing from Amsterdam to Windau on 18 August 1671.[35] For all other voyages, the pair were recognised as based in Courland.

Elsewhere, captains can be identified working for their previous employers. Here is the history of one Jacob du Pless:

[30] Sound Toll Registers Online. *www.soundtoll.nl.*
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*, p. 142; Jakovļeva, 'Statehood on the Territory of Latvia', (p. 276); Jakovļeva, 'Industry in Early Modern Times', (p. 35).
[35] Sound Toll Registers Online. *www.soundtoll.nl*.

Name	Origin	Port of Departure	Port of Destination	Date
Jacob Duplex	Danzig	Bourgneuf	Danzig	24/07/1678
Jacob Dupletz	Danzig	Danzig	Bordeaux	07/09/1678
Jacob Dupless	Windau	Windau	Unknown	23/06/1682
Jacob Dupless	Libau/ Windau	Shetland	Unknown	14/09/1682
Jacob Dupletz	Windau	Windau	Rouen	09/07/1684
Jacob du Pless	Libau	Rouen	Libau	04/11/1684

From the data available, it appears that du Pless was active in Danzig before moving to Couronian in the early 1680s. Other captains possessed intermeshed identities. In the 1650s and 60s, Jelle Helles switched between Terschelling and the duchy:

Name	Origin	Port of Departure	Port of Destination	Date
Jelle Helles	Courland	Courland	Hamburg	05/10/1656
Jelle Hilless	Courland	Hamburg	Unknown	10/10/1657
Jelle Helles	Terschelling	Courland	France	12/07/1661
Jelle Helles	Terschelling	France	Unknown	05/10/1661
Dow Helles	Terschelling	Libau	Unknown	19/11/1661
Jelle Helles	Terschelling	Courland	Unknown	01/12/1662
Jelle Helles	Courland	Amsterdam	Unknown	18/05/1663
Jelle Hilles	Terschelling	Holland	Unknown	09/10/1663
Jelles Helles	Courland	Windau	Unknown	13/12/1663
Jelle Heydes	Courland	Courland	Unknown	25/04/1664
Jelles Heddes	Windau	Windau	Busserne	06/06/1664
Jelles Hilles	Courland	Libau	Amsterdam	24/07/1668
Jelle Gillis	Courland	Holland	Courland	04/10/1668
Jelle Hilles	Windau	Windau	Unknown	06/11/1668
Jelle Hilless	Terschelling	Amsterdam	Memel	05/04/1669
Gelle Helles	Windau	Libau	Fredrikstad	20/05/1669
Jelle Helles	Courland	Fredrikstad	Windau	23/07/1669
Jelles Hilless	Courland	Fredrikstad	Windau	11/09/1669

Here it is ambiguous whether Jelle Helles originated from Courland or from Friesland, however, it is clear that he owed allegiance to more than one port.

Observing similar patterns amongst other Couronian captains leads to the following tentative suggestions for their connections.

Jan Jellis- Harlingen

Jelle Helles- Terschelling

Gerrit Hiddes- Ameland/ Amsterdam

Elcke Willemsen Spanjaert- Ameland

Jacob Everts Brauer- Vlieland/ Terschelling/ Rotterdam

Herman Adrianssen Koy- Vlieland

Carsten Steffens- Lübeck/ Amsterdam

Jacob du Pless- Danzig

Willum Phillipsen- Vlieland

Whilst some captains originally worked in traditional Hanse ports such as Lübeck and Danzig, the vast majority possessed connections in the United Provinces. This leads to the conclusion that, although Dutch and Frisian shipping routes did not attract Couronian captains as much as they did foreign sailors, the captains themselves often possessed a Dutch or Frisian backgrounds. The use of foreign captains was not an unusual practice, especially for a place such as Courland with a low population and a historic inability to conduct journeys outside of the Baltic. A mere nine years after negotiating greater access to the Sound Toll, the Duke of Courland possessed an outpost in Western Africa. Consequently, the use of foreign maritime labour was also a prominent feature of the Duke of Courland's colonial shipping activities.

Couronian Captains and Colonial Voyages

Courland's prior lack of participation in even European-wide trade inspired the recruitment of foreign sailors to fill the gaps in knowledge. Recruiting foreigners was not a feature unique to Couronian shipping. A more experienced colonial shipping power such as the Dutch also used maritime labour from places like Denmark to supplement the lack of manpower available from a low population. The Danish East and West India companies likewise used Dutch people to direct, govern and man their colonial operations.[36] Dutch colonial companies even went to Courland to find recruits. Thus, there was not a total ignorance in Courland of waters beyond Europe. Notaries from Amsterdam show that both the WIC and VOC recruited and carried out business in Courland. For instance, the *Salamander*

[36] Goebel, 'Danes in the Service of the Dutch', 77-94; Kaarle Wirta, *Early Modern Overseas Trade and Entrepreneurship: Nordic Trading Companies in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2020).

recruited three people in Courland for the VOC as soldiers on 15 September 1648.[37] On 29 January 1641, Fredrich Meyer of Courland was recruited to transport soldiers for the WIC.[38] Barent Jochems, a soldier enlisted by the Groningen chamber of the WIC, can be found working in Brazil from April 1655.[39]

Another Courlander in Brazil was Joachim Deniger who earned the moniker 'von Olinda', as a result of his service for the WIC in that settlement, now on the outskirts of Recife. He travelled to South America in 1630 and fought to protect the WIC gains there from the Portuguese.[40] His exploits outside of Europe earned him a place on Pieter Schulte's voyage from Courland to Gambia, which he joined from Copenhagen on 31 July 1651.[41] The soldier, born in Goldingen, possessed strong Dutch connections. His wife, Anna van Weelden, was a Dutchwoman. He was additionally tasked with recruiting 100 soldiers in the United Provinces to guard the fort on St Andreas.[42]

Ducal interaction with the Americas and Africa also pre-dated ducal colonies. *De Hoop* travelled to the Gold Coast to fetch pepper. Boudewijn Philipsen of the WIC identified the vessel in 1645, trading on the French side of Saint-Martin in the Caribbean.[43] Philipsen reported that the ship possessed a Dutch crew and had been carrying ivory and corn. As a Dutch crew acting outside WIC jurisdiction and trading in French lands, the WIC confiscated *de Hoop* as an interloper. According to Mattiesen, Willem Mollens Senior died on a voyage between Lisbon and Bahia in 1652, as part of Courland's deal to provide ships for Portugal's West Indian trade.[44] The papers of John Thurloe also describe casualties during the voyage of the *Leopard* which set out for Africa in April 1653. The captain, Claes Fredericksen traded copper for slaves in Guinea but died there and was replaced by his son Cornelius. Having not yet established a colony in Tobago, the *Leopard* sailed to Martinique. Cornelius then perished whilst hiring crew in St Christopher. The ship was eventually hit by a storm and impounded in Bristol.[45]

Several captains seem to have been appointed with the sole brief of transporting goods across the Atlantic. There are a great number of Couronian captains who are mentioned in the Sound Toll only

[37] Notary for VOC soldier transport, de Salamander, 15 September 1648, NL-SAA: 5075-54, inv. nr. 1325, fol. 137. Notary: Hendrik Schaef.
[38] Notary for the transporting of soldiers for the WIC, 29 January 1641, NL-SAA: 5075-54, inv. nr. 1641, fol. 17. Notary: Hendrik Schaef.
[39] Account book of WIC Personnel in Brazil, 1655, NL-HaNA 1.01.02 Staten Generaal, inv. nr. 12582.7, fol .412.
[40] Anderson, 'Die ersten Kurländischen Expeditionen', (p. 15).
[41] Mattiesen, 'Ein Tagebuch', (p. 192).
[42] Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*, p. 169.
[43] Anderson, 'Die ersten Kurländischen Expeditionen', (p. 24).
[44] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik,* p. 99.
[45] 'State Papers, 1655: April (5 of 6),' in *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe, Volume 3, December 1654 - August 1655*, ed. Thomas Birch (London: Fletcher Gyles, 1742), 396-410. British History Online, *http://www.british-history.ac.uk/thurloe-papers/vol3/pp396-410,* [Accessed 5 August 2021].

once for a journey to either Western Africa or the Lesser Antilles. Two examples are Pieter Feiches Eickemahr and Andre Bohm. Eickemahr sailed for Gambia in 1668 and was recorded by the Sound Toll on 21 October carrying 'Kraków linen', woollen cloth, canvas, brass, iron, resin, and 'trade goods'.[46] Andre Bohm sailed on the *Pax* in November 1654 with tar, oak planks, and 120 fresh colonists for Tobago.[47] Eickemahr does not appear anywhere else in the Sound Toll. The name 'Andress Bohm' is also very rare, only appearing again, employed in Hamburg, sailing from Lisbon to Danzig in 1675.[48] This suggests three possibilities. Firstly, that these captains were Couronian natives who had previously been engaged in only Baltic shipping. It seems unlikely that captains with no long-haul experience would be chosen to lead an arduous Atlantic journey, however the possibility should not be discounted. Alternatively, one may assume that these captains had experience beyond the Sound or even in the Atlantic, but as a first mate or boatswain. This practice was precedented as I shall describe later. The third possibility is that these captains were foreigners who had been hired especially for the journey into the Atlantic, and who had conducted long-haul journeys before but had never previously sailed to the Baltic.

There were captains who worked briefly for the duke, who are more easily traced within the Sound Toll registers. Unsurprisingly, these men were based in the Baltic, frequently in Denmark. A Danish captain may have been considered an asset as, following ducal orders, captains frequently recruited sailors, soldiers, and miners on Danish territory. Pieter Schulte, who first settled a Couronian garrison in the Gambia was such a Dane, very visible in the records. His Danish origins were a very key part of his identity. Schulte had received a commission from the Danish king, prior to his employment by Jakob and he clearly possessed connections in Denmark, recruiting in Copenhagen and Flekkerøy for the journey ahead.[49] His Danish identity was also a reason for the pastor of St Andreas, Gottschalk Ebeling, to doubt him. After Major Foch criticised him for helping Prince Ruprecht to hunt down English Commonwealth ships, Ebeling described him flying into a rage and threatening to sell the colony to his true master, the King of Denmark.[50]

Schulte's past in Danish shipping appears in the Sound Toll. We can even see that he was back in Denmark shortly after he was relieved of his duties by Duke Jakob in Summer 1652.[51] He used his Couronian experience in Africa to benefit a Danish expedition to the very same continent. Mentions of Schulte in the Sound Toll record read as follows:

[46] 'Crackouws lerret' and 'Kiobenschab', Sound Toll Registers Online. *www.soundtoll.nl*.
[47] Sound Toll Registers Online. *www.soundtoll.nl*; Historical Society of Trinidad and Tobago. 'A Pamphlet', p. 2.
[48] Sound Toll Registers Online. *www.soundtoll.nl*.
[49] Mattiesen, 'Ein Tagebuch', (pp. 192-193).
[50] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, pp.137-138.
[51] Ibid., p. 144; Sound Toll Registers Online. *www.soundtoll.nl*.

Name	Origin	Port of Departure	Port of Destination	Date
Pieter Schuelter	Groningen	Groningen	Unknown	24/09/1640
Peder Schuald	Copenhagen	Copenhagen	Unknown	03/04/1648
Peder Schueld	Copenhagen	Copenhagen	Unknown	11/04/1650
Peter Schulte	Courland	Courland and Copenhagen	Unknown	18/08/1651
Peter Schulte	Courland	Guinea	Unknown	03/07/1652
Peter Schullt	Copenhagen	Copenhagen	Africa	17/06/1654
Peter Schult	Lübeck	Lübeck	Unknown	14/12/1654
Peter Schullt	Lübeck	Lübeck	Unknown	29/05/1656
Pieter Schult	Lübeck	Hamburg	Unknown	16/09/1656
Pieter Schult	Lübeck	Gotland	Unknown	19/06/1657
Pieter Schult	Lübeck	Saint-Martin-de-Ré	Unknown	10/11/1657
Peter Schults	Lübeck	Danzig	Unknown	03/06/1658

The Sound Toll reveals further Couronian colonial sailors with a Baltic past. Jacob Ross was a Scottish captain, sent in January 1655 to Tobago aboard the *Constantia*. The boat carried provisions for the island colony, much of which, from the evidence of Joan Wicquefort's accounting, was purchased in the United Provinces.[52] The name Jacob Ross was associated with many North Sea and Baltic ports prior to service in Courland.

Name	Origin	Port of Departure	Port of Destination	Date
Jacob Ross	Bergen	Bergen	Unknown	09/05/1635
Jacob Ross	Bergen	Bergen	Unknown	03/08/1636
Jacob Ross	St Andrews	Køge	Unknown	08/04/1637
Jacob Ross	St Andrews	Königsberg	Unknown	08/06/1638
Jacob Ross	Bergen	Danzig	Unknown	03/08/1640
Jacob Ross	Lübeck	Danzig	Unknown	05/05/1641
Jacob Ross	Bergen	Bergen	Unknown	18/06/1642
Jacob Ross	St Andrews	Nantes	Unknown	22/08/1646
Jacob Ross	Courland	Riga	Unknown	09/10/1654
Jacob Ross	Courland	Kristiansand	Unknown	29/04/1656

[52] Ships' Accounts, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 837, fol. 72v. and fols. 90v-92v.

It must be repeated that linking these mentions of Jacob Ross is informed deduction rather than a recorded fact. Yet, the mobility of the Scottish diaspora in the Baltic supports this conclusion. The work of Steve Murdoch, Alexia Grosjean, and Esther Mijers has shown that Scottish people often found work in diverse locations in Northern Europe; some were known to switch allegiances rather regularly.[53] It is no surprise, therefore, to see Ross serving in Scotland, Norway, Lübeck, and Courland.

Colonial captains were not universally chosen from lands outside of Courland, nor were they always without experience of Courland itself. For instance, Peter Lübke, who accompanied Governor Schmoll to Tobago in 1686, conducted voyages from Windau in 1681. Lübke, named Peter von Lycke or Peter von Lubbe in the toll records, sailed on a round trip from Windau to Oldenburg, passing Helsingør on 24 June 1681 and 15 October 1681.[54] The Sound Toll recorded him on 4 January 1686 just a short time after other sources mention Lübke's departure from Courland to Tobago.[55] He carried ammunition, soldiers and '*tee*'.[56] The soldiers, sixty in total, were recruited in Copenhagen and were apparently mostly of German origin. [57] 'Tee' could translate as tea but it may have been '*teer*' or tar, given that it originated from Courland, a tar producing area, and Lübke paid no tax on it. Lübke, possibly conducted trade within the Baltic during his five-year absence from the Sound Toll, but this would be speculation. His return from Tobago is also absent, although the reasons for this are clearer. Tensions between Lübke and Schmoll were high as the Couronian party started to die, allegedly due to Schmoll's mismanagement. Lübke maintained that the old Couronian fort should be renovated, as per Duke Friedrich Casimir's instructions, but Schmoll ignored him.[58] Jan Waebes, the navigator on Lübke's ship the *Fortuna*, implied that the relationship became too challenging for Lübke, who left the island to sell wool and was never seen again.[59]

The same cannot be said for Pieter Gallesen, who returned to serve the dukedom after his trip to Tobago in 1671. He can be found in these records from the Sound Toll:

[53] Murdoch and Mijers, 'Migrant Destinations'; Murdoch, *Network North*; (Eds.) Steve Murdoch and Alexia Grosjean, *University of St Andrews Institute of Scottish Historical Research* (published to the internet November 2004), *www.st-andrews.ac.uk/history/ssne/* [Accessed 14 May 2019].
[54] Sound Toll Registers Online. *www.soundtoll.nl*.
[55] Ibid.; Edgar Anderson, 'Die Kurländische Kolonie Tobago II' in *Baltische Hefte* 8:4 (1962), 216-232 (p.225).
[56] Sound Toll Registers Online. *www.soundtoll.nl*.
[57] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 177.
[58] Von Treskow, 'Kapitän Barthold Otto Schmoll', (p. 68 and 70).
[59] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 178.

Name	Origin	Port of Departure	Port of Destination	Date
Peter Helle	Courland	Courland	Oldenburg	16/06/1670
Peter Hellessen	Windau	Oldenburg	Windau	09/09/1670
Pieter Gallassen	Windau	Windau	Tobago	12/01/1671
Peter Hesselssen	Windau	Newcastle	Copenhagen	23/10/1671
Peter Helle	Windau	Windau	Unknown	15/01/1674
Peter Jellessen	Windau	Oldenburg	Libau	30/06/1674
Petter Helless	Windau	Oldenburg	Windau	29/07/1675
Peter Hellessen	Windau	'Grot Cibonn'	Unknown	11/06/1676
Peter Hellessen	Windau	Newcastle	Copenhagen	27/08/1676
Peter Helessenn	Copenhagen	Windau	Newcastle	01/01/1677
Peter Hellessen	Windau	Libau	Bremen	29/04/1679
Peter Hellessen	Windau	Oldenburg	Windau	23/07/1678
Pieter Hellesen	Courland	Windau	Roscoff	20/12/1678
Peter Hellessen	Windau	Saint Martin de Ré	Windau	01/06/1679
Peter Hellessen	Windau	Riga	La Rochelle	22/08/1679
Peter Hellessen	Windau	Saint Martin de Ré	Windau	22/11/1679
Peter Hellessen	Windau	Windau	Oostende	09/03/1681
Peter Hessels	Windau	Oostende	Windau	06/07/1681
Peter Hellessen	Windau	Windau	Oldneburg	03/11/1681

Peter Hollessenn	Libau	Oldenburg	Libua	13/11/1681
Peter Hellessen	Windau	Engure	Harlingen	05/06/1682
Peter Hellessen	Windau	Windau	Roscoff	26/11/1682
Peter Hellessen	Windau	Unknown	Libau	18/06/1683
Peter Hellessen	Windau	Libau	Oldenburg	19/04/1684
Peter Hellessen	Windau	Saint Martin de Ré	Libau	15/08/1684
Peter Hellessen	Windau	Saint Martin de Ré	Windau	29/04/1686

The change from a 'G' to an 'H' at the start of the name may be a consequence of Dutch pronunciation and thus Dutch heritage. The example of Gallassen/ Hellessen shows that not all Couronian captains were employed for their colonial expertise but also engaged in local trade when the market demanded it.

Occasionally, we can track the career progression of Courland's captains, as many were previously employed as more junior crew on Atlantic voyages. This is also an indicator that some captains derived their experience from Couronian missions. Jan Brandt sailed with Willem Mollens to the Gold Coast as a senior crewmember in 1651. In 1652 he was at the centre of the controversy created by the WIC at Fort Elmina, who referenced him as someone who should be in their service rather than that of a foreign power. In 1655, he captained his own ship to Tobago.[60]

As a captain, Jan Rubeck predominantly ferried goods between Windau and Christiana.[61] His first journey recorded by the Sound Toll, left Windau and travelled past Helsingør on 12 July 1666. This trip, aiming for Greenland, was the only voyage captained by Rubeck which sailed into the Atlantic. However, prior to 1666, Rubeck gained experience in Africa. In November 1655 Rubeck sailed under Anders Jurgens to Gambia on the *Concordia* where he was boatswain. He returned from Africa in

[60] Copies of correspondence between Director General Ruijghaver and Willem Mollens, 9-10 March 1652, NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01 Oude West-Indische Compagnie, inv. nr. 13A, fols. 214-223; Ships' Accounts, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 837, fols. 44-44v.
[61] Sound Toll Registers Online. *www.soundtoll.nl.*

October 1657 with Captain Wilhelm Halbertsen by October 1657.[62] He then served until 1661 as the pilot of the *Isländer*, captained by Jelle Helles.[63]

Occasionally, career progression could be very rapid. As was the case with the *Leopard*, this often occurred due to unfortunate circumstances. Mortality was always a factor in colonial journeys. Rolof Tijsen replaced Jurgen Janssen as captain of *Concordia* in January 1655 because Janssen had died on St Andreas Island.[64] Pieter Schulte mentioned four individuals who died, in his log covering the period June 1651 to July 1652. One of the deceased, the first mate, had himself been a replacement for Pieter Steffens who was dismissed, along with Lieutenant Berent Frantzen, for drunkenness whist in Flekkerøy.[65] On the return journey, Schulte hired a new pilot whist passing Texel. The hiring of the Texel pilot appears only to have been a short-term commitment as another pilot was recruited only seventeen days later.[66] The episode shows that the composition of the crew could be fluid and flexible.

The choice of captains for Courland's colonial voyages were varied and diverse. The Sound Toll shows some to have had long careers travelling in and out of the Baltic Sea under various ports, while others are practically anonymous. Foreign captains sometimes offered greater expertise in Atlantic and other long-haul journeys but Couronian captains were also present. These Courlanders sometimes emerged after gaining colonial experience in the service of other colonial companies, or as more junior sailors on previous voyages to the Caribbean or Africa. They often appear in the later period of colonisation, after 1660, when Courlanders had generally become more familiar with long-distance shipping. Above all, the selection of Courland's colonial captains needed to be flexible because of the great dangers which faced crews who set sail into unfamiliar waters for voyages of considerable length.

The Crews of Colonial Voyages

The captains of the ships worked with the Couronian factors, in particular Momber and Pöpping, to compile detailed crew lists, complete with salaries, expenses, duration of service, and the responsibility of payment. Consequently, we have an extensive record of those who worked on Courland's colonial ships, particularly in the 1650s and 60s.[67] The size of the crew varied, depending on the ship and the length of the journey. *Das Wappen der Herzogin*, under Jan Brandt, employed thirty-four sailors for a journey to Tobago. The crew seem to have been paid for different lengths of service. For instance, six people served for twenty-four and a half months, eight worked for around

[62] Ships' Accounts, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 837, fol. 20v.
[63] Ibid., fol. 175.
[64] Diary of Nicolaes Groenewout, 1653-1655, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 850b.
[65] Mattiesen, 'Ein Tagebuch'.
[66] Ibid., (pp. 206-207).
[67] Ships' Accounts, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 837.

eighteen and a half months, and a further six were paid for four months.[68] It is therefore likely that there were only around twenty crewmembers at any one time. The *Fidelitas*' journey to Gambia in 1657, captained by Heinrich Caspersen, employed twenty-three people. These included, a captain and a first mate, as well as a constable, a 'barber' (surgeon), two senior boatswains, a cook, a carpenter, and a sail maker. There were also two 'boys' onboard along with a merchant, who would buy supplies for the ship. [69] Occasionally there would be a first mate and a second mate, along with a senior carpenter and a carpenter's apprentice. This was the case on several journeys such as the Gambian voyages of the *Walfisch* under Johan Jacob Schot in 1654 and the *Princessin* under Jelle Helles from 1654 to 1655.[70]

The voyage of Jacob Albertsen, also known as Jacob Albertsen Kieckert, is an example of a journey which required many hands. Albertsen travelled to Tobago in September 1656 on the *Constantia* with Wolfert Brederot, the temporary governor, and 130 colonists.[71] He returned, via Memel, in November 1657. In the ducal account book, there are two crew lists for the *Constantia*, indicating who started the journey and who was present for the return leg. In the original crew there were thirty-five names, on the second thirty-four.[72] Salaries are listed for the first two months of the voyage, and it is implied that the entire crew stayed for at least this period, meaning that thirty-five was a full crew. Like the *Walfisch* and *Princessin*, the *Constantia* benefitted from a first and second mate, as well as a chief and junior carpenter. It had at least two cooks, two constables, two quartermasters, two senior boatswains, a sail master, and a head surgeon. The ship included one cabin boy, who was considered senior to two 'boys'. The *Constantia* also possessed a commis, responsible for the merchandise, and a secretary.

On the journey to Memel, the crew had been replenished with new personnel. Just under one half of the original crew of the *Constantia* did not complete the return journey, potentially as a result of fatalities or settlement in the Caribbean. In 1657, the majority of the crew were paid for almost seventeen months' worth of work, with the longest serving, the boatswain, Jacob Morensz, being paid for eighteen months. Other tenures show the crew constantly adapted. Daniel Henning was paid for ten months, Jacob Janssen for six, and Brendt Classen for four. The document makes special mention of Cornelis Arents, Jasper Jaspersen, and Jan Janzen who served on the ship for a month, implying that it was not at its full contingent when it set off from Tobago. Several personnel also changed jobs midway through the trip. For instance, Peter Jacobsen served eleven months as a cabin boy and five months as a junior boatswain.[73]

[68] Ibid., fol. 44.
[69] 'Barbier' and 'Junge'. ibid., fol. 117.
[70] Ibid., fol. 6 and fol. 4v.
[71] Historical Society of Trinidad and Tobago. 'A Pamphlet', p. 2.
[72] Ships' Accounts, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 837, fols. 82-82v.
[73] Ibid., fols. 127-129v.

The large crew on the *Constantia* stands in stark contrast to crews engaged in continental rather than intercontinental trade, which was sometimes conducted on small herring busses. *Die Drei Herringe* contained seven personnel when it was captured by the English in 1664.[74] However, the pay could be consistent. Rubeck received the same pay as boatswain of the *Levitas* in the Baltic as he did on the *Concordia* in Africa, a sum of ten reichsthaler per month.[75] The ships' accounts show that salaries for certain roles were roughly comparable across several journeys. The captain received around thirty reichsthaler a month, the first mate twenty reichsthaler. The cook could be paid eight to ten reichsthaler for each month of service. There were exceptions, however, as the table below shows. In particular, the salary of the boatswain and the carpenter were prone to small fluctuations. Salaries could vary for certain parts of the voyage. For example, Jacob Albertsen was paid twenty reichsthaler per month for his captaincy of the *Constantia* between 10 June 1656 and 10 December 1656, but from 10 December 1657 to 1 September 1657 he was paid thirty reichsthaler. The salary decreased again to twenty reichsthaler per month from 1 September 1657 to 1 November 1657.[76] The *Constantia* passed through the Sound Toll on the way to the Caribbean on 19 November 1656 and sailed the other way on 2 September 1657.[77] The salary increase perhaps reflects the time when the ship sailed into open ocean, having passed the Couronian factors at Amsterdam and Copenhagen. A similar phenomenon can be found with the crew of the *Isländer* which received a slightly smaller salary for local journeys between December 1660 and March 1661, than it did between 10 June 1656 and 8 October 1657.[78] On 10 October 1657, the ship sailed eastward through the Sound, carrying salt from Hamburg having returned from a slave trading mission.[79]

[74] 'Three Herrings of Courland', TNA: HCA 32/10/119, Prize Papers of the English Admiralty.
[75] Ships' Accounts, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 837, fol. 20v. and 175.
[76] Ibid., fol. 82 and 127.
[77] Ibid., fols. 82-84 and fols. 127-129v.
[78] Ibid., fols. 126-126v and fol. 143v.
[79] Sound Toll Registers Online. *www.soundtoll.nl.*

	Cavalier May 1658, Windau to Tobago[80]	*Isländer* 10 June 1656-8 October 1657, slaving journey to Africa and Caribbean	*Isländer* 11 December 1660-March 1661, Lübeck to Courland, and salaries paid in Copenhagen 15 May 1662	*Constantia* April to June 1656, unknown journey	*Constantia*, 10 June 1656 to 2 November 1657, Courland to Tobago and back	*Prudentia*, August 1653 journey to Gambia[81]
Captain	30	20	20	25	20 – 30	30
Mate/ Pilot	20	14	12	13 ⅓ (First Mate) – 12 (Second Mate)	15 ⅓ - 12 (First Mate) – 13 ⅓ (Second Mate)	16
Carpenter	9	-	-	12 ⅓ (Senior Carpenter)- 6 (Junior Carpenter)	12 ⅓ (Senior Carpenter)- 6 (Junior Carpenter)	12
Cook	10	9	6	8	8	8
Senior Boatswain	-	8	7	9 ⅓	-	12
Sailor	5	-	5	4 ⅔	4 ⅔	5
Boy	3	2	-	2 ⅓ - 2	-	2 ½

[80] Ships' Accounts, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 837, fol. 147v.
[81] Ibid., fol. 22v.

Whilst the actual salary could be quite consistent between journeys, the calculation of the salaries often was not. The ship's accounts frequently switch between reichsthalers, which were commonly used in Courland, and alternative currencies. Some payments were measured in Dutch florins and guilders as well as Lübeck marks, but the most common alternative was the florin or the Riga gulden. This was equivalent to three reichsthalers, which is why fractions of thirds appear frequently in the table. The prominent use of the Riga gulden indicates that Riga was still the most powerful financial centre in the region.[82]

Salaries and expenses were frequently paid by the factor, most commonly Momber or Pöpping, but occasionally by Joan van Wicquefort. Sometimes half the costs would be paid by the factor and half by the captain or the ducal treasury, when the vessels returned to Courland. Sailors would commonly receive two months' pay before they set out. Pay could also be deducted. This occurred if a crewmember had consumed or acquired some of the cargo; brandy and tobacco were frequently mentioned in this regard. There were also instances of the crew being fined for sailing poorly. This was the case when the *Pietas* returned to Europe in Summer 1656. In the ship's accounts it is noted that the crew had been docked their wages for the period between 3 June 1655 and 20 July 1656, 'because they have sailed the ship off course', however, 'His Highness, out of grace, allows them to be paid half their wages as all the others who sail in the Baltic Seas'.[83] This small section provided one reason explaining why wages could change throughout the course of a journey. It also indicates that there was a distinction between wages paid to those who sailed in the Baltic Sea and those who sailed beyond it.

The note portrays the level of accountability placed on the shoulders of the captain and crew. Johann Nagel, who commanded the *Blumentopf* on two occasions, appears to have been very ill-regarded after his ship was taken by Algerian corsairs in 1681. The envoy of Courland in London explained to the English court on 13 March 1687 that, 'Nagel, the Commander (a mere stranger to His Highness) betrayed it [the *Blumentopf*] to those of Algiers'.[84] Captains, of course, had important obligations. When Hendrick Jansz became the captain of the *Neptunus* in 1650, he took an oath before the duke's notaries. Jansz vowed to be honest and competent in his duties as a captain, promising to be ready to

[82] Ships' Accounts, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 837; Fritz Verdenhalven (ed.), *Alte Mess- und Währungssysteme aus dem Deutschen Sprachgebiet: Was Familien- und Lokalgeschichtsforscher Suchen* (Neustadt an der Aisch: Degener, 1993); Jürgen von Hahn, *Bäuerlichen Verhältnisse auf den herzoglichen Dömänen Kurlands im XVII. und XVIII Jahrhundert* (Karlsruhe: G. Braunsche, 1911), p. 154; Copy of a statement on the use of currency in Courland and the exchange rate in the United Provinces by Melchior Cromhuijsen, Jacob Nacroth and Volkert Volkersz, 25 February 1676, NL-UtHUA: 32 Familie Boetzlaer, inv. nr.1086, scan 61.

[83] 'weilln sie dass schiff versiegelt habe' and 'lassen ihr hoch Fhl. Dhl. ihnen auss gnaden ½ jahr gaege, wie ale anderen so in die ost seen fahren beckommen.'. Ships' Accounts, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 837, fol. 80v.

[84] Historical Society of Trinidad and Tobago. 'An Impartial Account', p.4. It seems unlikely that Jakob did not know Nagel, he had sailed for Tobago in 1668. On 24 January 1668 he wrote to the Duchess to ask for more supplies and funding, LVVA: 554, apr. 2621, l. 837, fol. 7.

sail in all weathers, not to be wasteful with the duke's money, and 'that I will keep the ship, its tools, appendages and dependencies well, and will take good care of it'.[85] The oath signed by the colonists on 10 May 1655, promising to 'defend faithfully the previously mentioned land as well as the ships and forts to the last man', shows that the garrison were also liable for damage to the ships. The passage portrays the ship's place as an appendage of the colony, as well as the central role of ships in colonial identity.[86]

The oath is also of interest because it gives us a glimpse of the names of colonial soldiers, something that is rarely revealed. The names of Jan I Mulke, Hendrick Braderk, Willem Pourres, Jan Brewer, Hendrick Adams, Willem Kerff, Samuel Vonts, Henrich Kernich, Robbert Perkens, Edwerd Jood, Joseph Hall, Jan Pitvogel, Rutgert Kroswegh, Frans Tunstall, Tonas Mose, Jan Stencks, Anthony Damny and Wolter Wossid, have elicited considerable interest from Edgar Anderson and Karin Jekabson-Lemanis.[87] They recognise that the majority seem to be foreigners and from names like 'Joseph Hall', 'Frans Tunstall', and 'Willem Pourres', that seems a wise conclusion. They also use the names as an indication that Latvians may have been involved in the colonial venture. Jekabson-Lemanis argues that a handful of these names can be converted into Latvian, the examples given being:

Jan I. Mulke = Jānis Mulkis (from Muļķis meaning fool)

Burres= Burvim or Buris (from Būris meaning cage)

Jan Brewer= Jānis Bruvens

Kennisch= Kenins (from Kēniņš, an old word for king)

Perkens= Perkons (meaning thunder)[88]

This method of determining someone's origin, or translating a name into another language, is tenuous. Where one may see a Latvian Jānis Bruvens, one may also see a Dutch Jan Breuer. Where a Latvian might read Perkons, an English-speaker may read Perkins. Jekabson-Lemanis engages with the possibility that some of the names could be Latvian, however there are also many other possibilities. In the shipping records there are hundreds of names and many of them can be interpreted as one of a great number of nationalities. We can only be sure if a writer decided to mention it. Johan Jansen, a

[85] 'Dat ick het schip het gereetschap, appendentie ende dependentie van dien wel bewaren ende daer vooren goede sorge dragen sal'. Oath of Hendrick Jansz, 13 October 1650, NL-SAA: 5075-38, inv. nr. 876, fols.218-218v. Notary: Jacob van Zwieten.

[86] 'wy het meergem Landt, als oock de schepen ende forten tot aen de Leste man getroulyck sullen defenderen,'. Contract signed by soldiers serving the Duke of Courland on Tobago, 10 May 1655, NL-HaNA: 1.10.29, Collectie Fagel, inv. nr .445 fols. 1-1v.

[87] Ibid.; Jekabson-Lemainis, 'Balts in the Caribbean', (pp. 37-39).

[88] Translations of the names are my own. Jekabson-Lemainis, 'Balts in the Caribbean', (p. 37).

long-term crewmember of the *Constantia*, could well be a Germanic Johan Jantzen, a Dutch Jan Jansen, a Danish Hans Hansen, a Swedish Jon Jonsson, aa anglophone John Johnson, or a Latvian Jānis Jansons. In fact, he was from Bordeaux, written next to his name in the crew list.[89] The listing is not an indication that Johan Jansen was French, he may have been an ethnic German who began his sailing career in Bordeaux. The association with Bordeaux, however, would not have been revealed if one had analysed only his name. The origin of this Johan Jansen can only be proven with explicit source information.

Unfortunately, instances of country of origin being provided are rare, or they are incomplete, naming the country of only a few crewmembers. There are only four mostly complete lists provided for crews who sailed Atlantic waters between 1654 and 1658. In addition, the same problem that afflicts crew names also affects the place names. Toponyms are obscurely spelled or are easy to confuse with other places. For instance, the crew list of the *Constantia* under Jacob Ross in December 1655, mentions 'Seeland' or 'Seelandt' which in certain circumstances could refer to 'Zeeland' in the Netherlands or 'Sjælland' in Denmark interchangeably.[90] Nevertheless, these four lists are useful for building a picture of how Couronian crews were brought together.

The composition of Couronian crews was highly influenced by the captain who took some responsibility for manning his ship. Very clear instances can be seen through evidence of nepotism, whereby captains took younger members of their family onboard. Joachim Bruning's son, Hendrick, who testified to the English admiralty upon the capture of *Die Drei Herringe* is one example.[91] Schulte's unfortunate nephew, Andres Jorgens, who died in Africa, is another.[92] The ties between crew and captain, regardless of whether they were related or not, are clear when we compare the crews of a ship where the captain had changed. Two of the four lists pertain to the *Constantia* but under two different captains: Jacob Albertsen and Jacob Ross. The dating of the two receipts is very close together. Ross' dates to December 1655 when the *Constantia* had just arrived back from Tobago. Albertsen's accounts were written in April 1656. The *Constantia* would leave again for Tobago under Albertsen in September.[93]

The home ports of each crew are represented on the maps below. Where no place has been indicated, I have assumed that that crewmember hailed from Courland. Occasionally, I have been unable to

[89] Ships' Accounts, LVVA: 554, apr.1, l. 837, fol. 80v.
[90] Ibid., fols. 90v-91.
[91] 'Three Herrings of Courland', TNA: HCA 32/10/119, Prize Papers of the English Admiralty.
[92] Mattiesen, 'Ein Tagebuch', (p. 200).
[93] Ships' Accounts, LVVA: 554, apr.1, l. 837, fols. 90v-91; ibid., fols. 82-82v; Historical Society of Trinidad and Tobago. 'A Pamphlet', p. 2.

decipher a place name or have been unsure if my interpretation is accurate. This is displayed on the map with an orange place marker. Place markers are proportionally larger depending on the frequency in which a certain place has been mentioned.

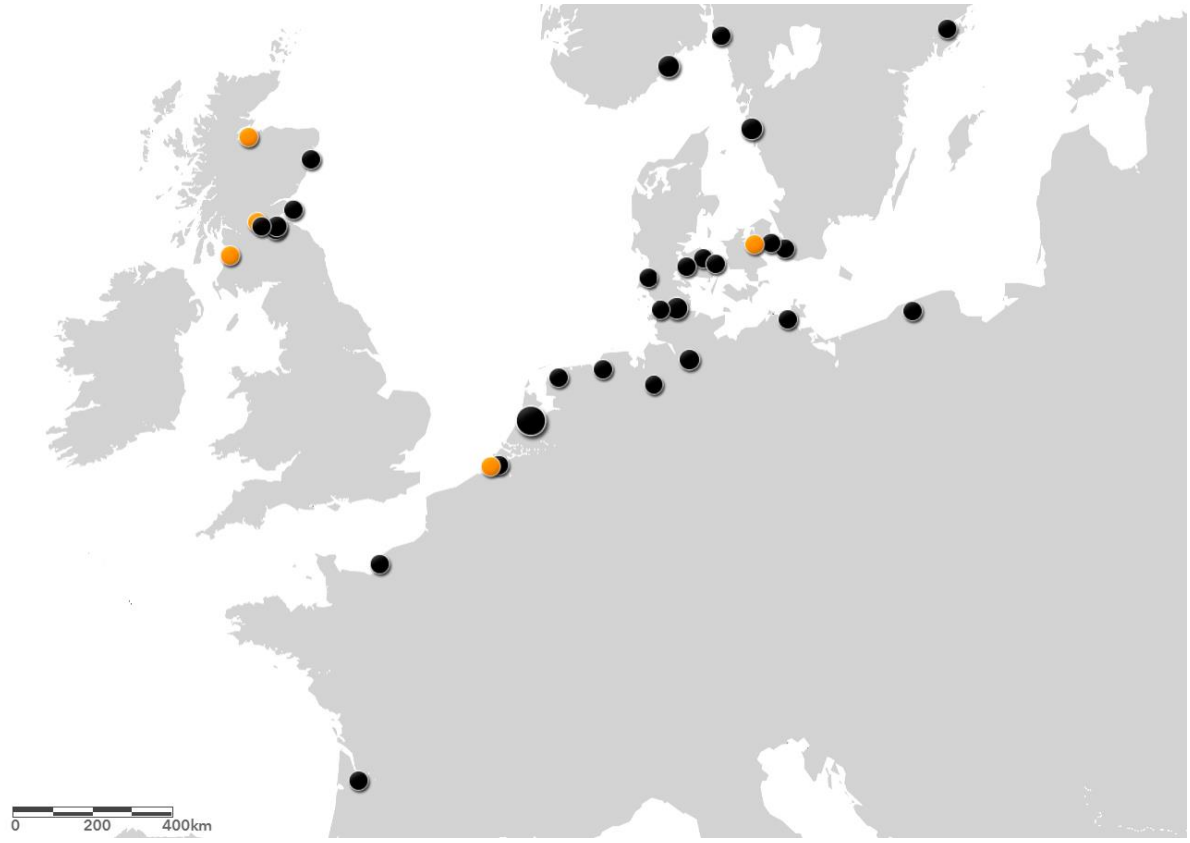


Figure 16: The crew of the *Constantia*, December 1655 under Jacob Ross

The captain of the ship is included in the list which marks him as Scottish, along with eight other crewmembers. Ross' Scottish background would appear to have partly determined the compilation of the crew. There was also a significant contingent of Amsterdammers, perhaps chosen for their colonial experience in the WIC, or else they were recruited because the ship stopped in Amsterdam, and it was a good opportunity to recruit further hands. There were also a substantial number of Scandinavians, which also indicates where the ship took on crew. The crewmembers from furthest afield originated from France: the previously discussed Johan Janssen (here Johan Johansen) of Bordeaux and Reyerd Dirck from Le Havre.[94] These 'boys' were the lowest ranked crewmembers, an indication that apprenticeships could often take a person into the service of masters across Europe to gain a worldly experience.

[94] Ships' Accounts, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 837, fols. 90v-91.

Ross' crew not only shows the influence of foreign captains, but also the diversity of origins in early modern crews. Not a single member of the crew was Couronian. The distinctly Couronian character of a Couronian ship was its owner, and not its crewmembers who were in service to the duke of via their employment, not their residence. It would, therefore, be quite impossible to satisfy Berķis' complaint that some of Jakob's colonial failures lay in trusting foreign personnel, who were not loyal to him. The employment of foreign crewmembers was a normal procedure, and it was hardly for the duke to decree that all his sailors were to be native Couronians. By the time Albertsen took charge of the *Constantia* there were some continuities but also some significant changes.[95]

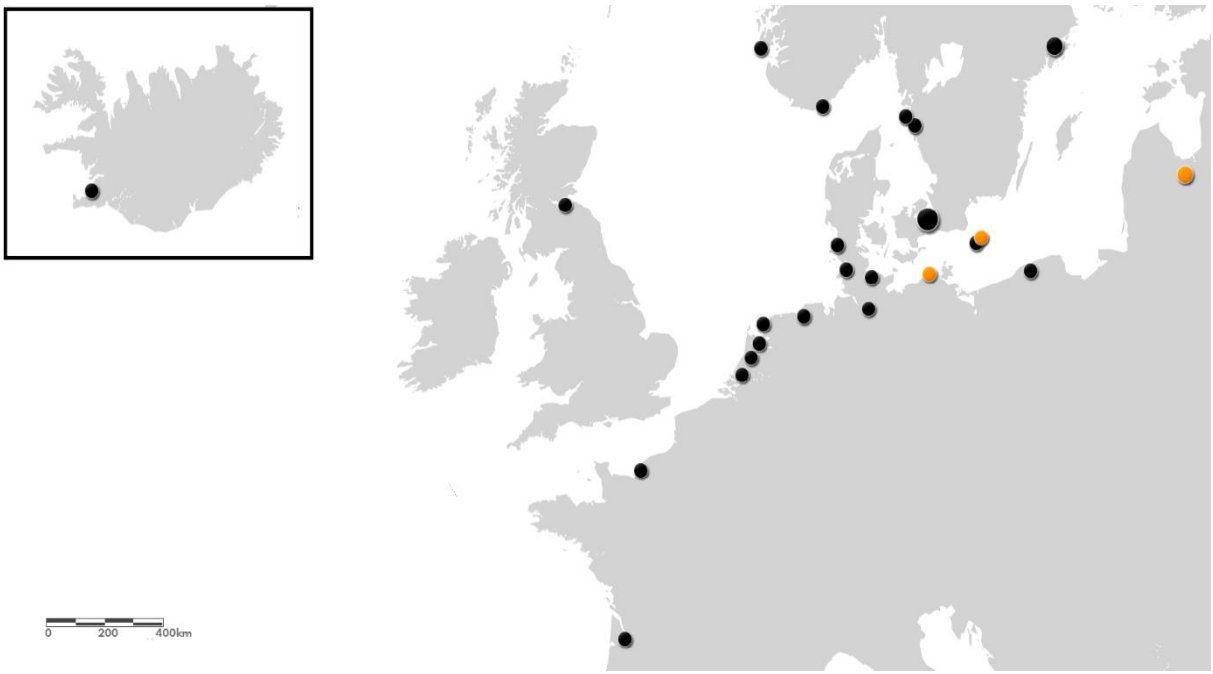


Figure 17: The crew of the *Constantia*, April 1656 under Jacob Albertsen.

Six crewmembers remained from Ross' tenure. The two junior members of the crew from France stayed in place, as did Michael Connie from Stolpe. There was also Johan Berentsen from Husum, Brendt Andersen from Gothenburg, and Bartell Siebrandsen who is not listed with a town of origin in Albertsen's receipts, but he is listed in Ross' documents from Ballum, then in Holstein.[96] By contrast, all the Scots that sailed under Ross had departed; the sailor from Leith was a new recruit. The nine people from Amsterdam also left. They were replaced by one person from Amsterdam but also eight sailors from Copenhagen, including the captain.[97] The two crews of the *Constantia* display how a captain brought his own men from his own locality. Consequently, when the duke hired foreign captains, he also received foreign crews.

[95] 'Elderdam' and 'Sörse' have not been identified.
[96] Ships' Accounts, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 837, fol. 90v.
[97] Ibid., fols. 82-82v.

The men of the *Constantia* originated mostly from particular hubs in Scotland, Holland and Scandinavia. However, the overall geographical spread was quite broad across the Baltic and North Seas. This was not the case for the 1654 voyage undertaken by Wilhelm Halbertsen and Jelle Helles between Gambia and Lübeck.



Figure 18: The crew of the *Prinzessin,* July 1654

The crew of the *Prinzessin* mostly hailed from a very narrow area around Denmark, Northern Germany, and Southern Sweden. There were outliers in Norway and a man from 'Marberg'. [98] On the evidence of later documents, I have marked this as Warberg.[99] The map shows the prominence of Scandinavia and Holstein in hiring Couronian crews. In particular, it emphasises the value of strong maritime links in Denmark. Ships required permission to travel through the Sound Toll from the Danish authorities, as well as good relations with Danish suppliers and craftsmen to prepare the vessel. Couronian colonial voyagers also took advantage of the area's human resources, reflecting the Baltic nature of Courland's colonial endeavours. If Couronian colonialism was emblematic of Duke Jakob's will to strike out from the Baltic, his crews often represented the people who resided at the gateway of the sea. This foreign composition of Couronian crews makes the duke's shipping practices more usual than unusual in the context of seventeenth century maritime employment. As previously mentioned in this chapter, Dutch colonial crews recruited from across Europe, including in Courland itself. English ships took on Irish seamen and colonists for Atlantic journeys, particularly as

[98] Ibid., fol. 4v.
[99] Ibid., fol. 54.

unemployment in the British Isles rose.[100] In Courland, where there was a lack of disposable population, the hiring of foreign crewmembers was even more necessary, so conformity to the usual practice was an obvious path to pursue. As Couronian ships needed to stop in Denmark to pay the toll, it made sense to recruit there.

It is notable that the *Prinzessin* possessed only one confirmed Couronian, a certain Jürgen Henricksen. Henricksen worked in quite a junior role, as the cook's assistant he was the second to last person on the list.[101] Based on the assumption that no indicated port means that the sailor was Couronian, Jacob Schote's journey to Gambia in June 1654 displays greater participation from Courlanders. [102]



Figure 19: The crew of *Walfisch*, June 1654- October 1655.

In this case there are several gaps, thirteen in total. As shown with the example of Bartell Siebrandsen, this method of assuming that gaps denote the presence of Courlanders is not fool proof. However, an equally as inconsistent crew list for Schote's voyage, included earlier in the accounts, actively identifies three Courlanders as well as two Danes and a man from Flensburg.[103] The crew list of the *Walfisch* proves that at least some Couronian sailors were involved in colonial trips. However, the general lack of Courlanders may explain why foreign observers associated Couronian outposts

[100] Akenson, *If the Irish Ran the World*.
[101] Ships' Accounts, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 837, fol. 4v.
[102] 'Siuwater' is unidentifiable. I have placed a marker in Dublin to represent the uncertain inclusion of 'Ireland' in the list. If the source does indeed mean Ireland, then the port was more likely Galway or Cork which were involved in more long-haul trade than Dublin. Ibid., fols. 55-57.
[103] Ibid., fol. 6.

with the duke rather than with Courland itself, or in the case of Robert Holmes, completely disassociated Courland from the inhabitants of its outpost.[104] His comment that St Andreas Island was a place full of Dutchmen pretending to be Courlanders, gains more traction if there was a chance that he did not even encounter any Courlanders.

Couronian Ships

Ducal ships were the vehicle of Courland's colonial ambitions, as well as a powerful status symbol. The growth of the trading fleet was connected to the dukedom's increasing industriousness and importance on a broader stage.[105] This development has been downplayed in recent years by Jakovļeva and Yevstratyev who both argue that the number and effectiveness of these ships has been exaggerated.[106] By necessity, the first transatlantic ship under ducal ownership, *de Hoop*, was built in the United Provinces because of obstacle of the Sound Toll. [107] In the early years of Jakob's reign, the duke did not possess an agreement to regularly ship goods through the Sound Toll and foreign shipbuilding expertise had not yet permeated into Courland. The Couronian use of Dutch-built ships was not limited to this early period of ducal shipping. Friedrich Casimir commissioned the *Reus* (or *Geant*) to be built in the United Provinces in 1676 whilst a 1662 notary document from Rotterdam chronicles the debts of Lennart Rokes who provided Courland with *de Ringelduijf.*[108] The United Provinces was not the only provider of ships. *Schwan* was a Lübeck ship bought in May 1647 and *Hecht* transferred from Swedish to Couronian hands in 1673.[109]

The first ship to be built in Courland was the *Fortuna* at Libau in 1639, a three-mast ship, followed by *St Jacob*, which was constructed with two masts.[110] Shipbuilding then transferred to Windau until Friedrich Casimir reinstituted Libau's role as a wharf. Couronian ships faced some physical limitations other transatlantic vessels did not. The Baltic Sea is a particularly shallow body of water and thus Couronian vessels would have been unable to hold as much cargo as their counterparts from colonial powers already on the Atlantic. Additionally, Jakovļeva points out that the wharf at Windau was too small to construct warships and thus Couronian ships may have been quite diminutive compared to their peers.[111] One of the duke's first and most impressive colonial ships, *Das Wappen*

[104] Gray, *A History of The Gambia*, p. 58.
[105] Ernst Henning, *Geschichte der Stadt Goldingen in Kurland* (Mitau: J.F. Steffenhagen und Sohn, 1809); Anderson, 'Die Ersten Kurländischen Expeditionen', (p. 23); von Mirbach, *Briefe aus und nach Kurland*.
[106] Jakovļeva, 'Mythos und Realität'; Yevstratyev, 'Colonial Reality'.
[107] Anderson, 'Die Ersten Kurländischen Expeditionen', (p. 23).
[108] Historical Society of Trinidad and Tobago. 'A Pamphlet', p. 5; Notary of the commission of *Reus* for Prince Friedrich Casimir of Courland, 6 January 1662, NL-RtGAR: 18 Archieven van de Notarissen te Rotterdam, inv. nr. 733, akt. 152, fol. 217; Notary of the debts of Lennart Rokes, 16 Februray 1662, ibid., akt. 157, fol. 223.
[109] Jakovļeva, 'Mythos und Realität', (p. 89).
[110] Jakovļeva, 'Statehood on the Territory of Latvia', (p. 276).
[111] Jakovļeva, 'Mythos und Realität', (p. 99).

der Herzogin von Kurland, measured 140 Amsterdam feet (39.6 metres) long and 29 feet (8.2 metres) wide.[112] Although it was large enough for a crew of sixty, supported by thirty-six canons, it was considered too small for military purposes. Hence when Fircks offered the King of France warships, he took two trading vessels instead.[113]

Although the duke offered warships in both England and France, Jakovļeva rightly points out that Courland never used ships for war. This was not only a result of neutrality but also the inferior capabilities of ducal ships. Jakovļeva therefore criticises the emphasis put upon cannons and weaponry by Henning, Berķis and others.[114] However, Couronian officials seem to have been equally obsessed with the number of cannons aboard their ships. Several letters from Couronian factors to Friedrich Wilhelm detailed the weaponry ducal ships boasted. Pöpping even advised that the thirty-three canons on *Pax* could be increased to forty if required.[115] The agreement for the Portuguese Brazil company to use *Das Wappen der Herzogin* in 1650, included the number of cannons a list of military supplies including, '3600 pounds of gunpowder, 700 round cannonballs, 360 shooting bolts' and 200 pounds of musket shots.[116]

The emphasis on weaponry most likely derived from fears of prize taking which, as we have established, claimed many Couronian vessels in both European and Atlantic spaces. The capture of *Möwe*, *Orpheus* and *Islandfahrer* linked the European activities of the Kettler with their colonial fortunes. Couronian ships were also vulnerable to the colonial competition which had compelled the duke's garrisons to surrender his landed colonial possessions. Dutch forts on the Gold Coast were particular offenders in this regard. The *Walfisch* under Willem Mollens fell afoul of Governor Ruijghaver of Fort Elmina in March 1652 for disrupting local trade and the WIC's hold upon it. Ruijghaver also identified the presence of Jan Brandt as an affront given that, he believed, Dutchmen should be in the service of the WIC and not the Duke of Courland.[117] Mollens was able to leave amicably on this occasion. On 3 February 1659 he was again questioned by Elmina when he visited the Guinean coast to pick up slaves en route to Tobago. The skipper, now captaining *Cavalier*, protested, 'please understand that I come from Tobago and, by the grace of God, will leave for

[112] Contract between Hendrik Momber and Jeronimo Nunes da Costa, 1650, LVVA: 554, apr.1, l. 709, fols. 243-244.
[113] Jakovļeva, 'Mythos und Realität', (p.92).
[114] Ibid., (pp.82-84); Henning, *Geschichte der Stadt*; Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, pp.182-186.
[115] Letter from Conrad Mollen to Great Elector Friedrich Wilhelm, 23 December 1658, Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin (hereafter GStA PK): I. HA Rep.9 Polen nr.7 e Fasz 2, fol. 14.
[116] 'drij duijsend ses hondert lb bossekruijt, seven hondert ronde coegels, drijhondert sestich schiet bouts'. Contract between Hendrik Momber and Jeronimo Nunes da Costa, 1650, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 709, fol. 243.
[117] Copies of correspondence between Director General Ruijghaver and Willem Mollens, 9-10 March 1652, NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01 Oude West-Indische Compagnie, inv. nr. 13A, fols. 214-223.

Calabar to give [get] slaves'.[118] Again, Mollens was free to sail on, however, the *Pietas* was not so fortunate. Captain Adries Crava had planned to trade slaves he had collected from Western Africa 'in places like Rio de Plato or Bonnes Aijres'.[119] Crava was not afforded the opportunity to trade his 100 slaves as he was spotted in Axim by the WIC and brought to Elmina.[120] The *Pietas* had set sail in 1659 so Duke Jakob could not complain about its confiscation until March 1661. By March 1662, Jakob still contested the States General's claim that the WIC's agreement with Momber meant that they were justified in keeping the craft.[121]

Occasionally, captured vessels would be returned to the duke after a period of discussion, as was the case with *Walfisch* and *Die Drei Heringe*. In other instances, foreign admiralties retained or auctioned ducal ships. The *Invidia* had been sold by 1665, despite sustained Couronian protests.[122] The *Gekröntes Elend* suffered the same fate at the hands of the Spanish in 1645.[123] In times of war, there was no room for latitude. Sweden's invasion not only blockaded Couronian traders into their ports, but also picked off returning colonial vessels. Both *Jacobus Minor* and *Fortitude* seemed oblivious to the dangers, sailing to the Baltic despite news of Jakob's capture. According to Eckert, the duke lost 100,000 reichsthalers worth of colonial goods as a result of this mistake.[124] The two ships joined the *Jäger* and the *Concordia* as ships lost to the Swedes. Pöpping reported in January 1659, that Swedish forces held the *Jäger* in Lübeck and had set *Concordia* on fire.[125]

A final reason for the loss of a ship was the individual decision of a captain or governor facing hardship. Mollens, sailing to Tobago in 1659, presumably heard about the discord within the garrison at Fort Jacobus. He diverted the *Cavalier* to Jamaica, thus losing the vessel for the duke. Jakob contacted the English governor of Jamaica, Sir Thomas Lynch, about the *Cavalier* in 1673.[126] Similarly, an indebted Governor Schmoll fled his colony in 1687 to raise funds which he eventually did by mortgaging his ship, the *Fortuna*, in Boston, Massachusetts in July 1687.[127]

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[118] 'gelievet te verstaan, als dat ick com uut Tobago en sal met God lieft na Calbarij om slaven te geven'. Copy of a note from Willem Mollens to the fort of Elmina, 3 February 1659, NL-HaNA, 1.05.14 Inventaris van het Nederlandse Bezittingen ter Kust van Guinea, inv.nr. 81, scan 60.

[119] 'plaetse als Rio de Plato of Bonnes Aijres'. Instructions for the officers of the ship *Pietas,* 30 April 1659, NL-HaNA, 1.01.02 Staten Generaal, inv.nr. 5767, scan 90.

[120] Report on the hijack of the Pietas, 23 March 1661, NL-SAA: 5075-119, inv. nr. 2717A, fols. 297-297v. Notary: Vincent Swanenburgh.

[121] Duke Jakob to States General, 9 February 1662, NL-HaNA: 1.01.02 Staten Generaal, inv. nr. 7317.

[122] Resolutions concerning the West India Company, NL-HaNa: 1.01.02 Staten-Generaal, inv. nr. 4848, fol. 209v.

[123] Jakovļeva, 'Mythos und Realität', (p. 82).

[124] Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*, p. 186.

[125] Jakovļeva, 'Jauns Avots', (p.37); Letter from Friedrich Pöpping to the court of Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg-Prussia, GStA PK: I. HA Rep.9 Polen nr.7 e Fasz 2, fol. 18v.

[126] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, p. 496.

[127] Anderson, 'Die kurländische Kolonie Tobago II', (p. 225).

Colonial shipping for the duchy carried significant risk. Even before the experience of Willem Mollens on the Gold Coast, other captains faced doubts over similar voyages. On 8 October 1650, Momber, reported:

> '[Captain] Marten Martens still waits for a continuous wind […] they do not want to insure for policies to do with Africa, or for the risk of being taken by the West Indian Company […] I hope His Highness' ships do not need it but the ships are not equipped [with weaponry] and have Dutchmen onboard'.[128]

Passports were one method of insuring a ship against foreign hostility, which the duke diligently pursued, for instance in his correspondence with Louis XIV in 1677 and Charles II in 1678.[129] In other circumstances, the factor, most frequently Momber, organised payment to an insurer. Momber's contract, signed on 1 June 1650, decreed that he was obliged to 'obtain [insurance] at the lowest price possible'.[130] If an insurance deal was not 'made to our [the Duke of Courland's] orders', then it was Momber who was responsible for it and not Jakob. Momber himself was the insurance from bad insurers; he acted as a guarantor should the insurance company collapse. In addition, he was to pay for damages and losses within three months 'whether he got paid from the insurers or not'. He would then receive 1.5 % of any insurance owed. Mitau would also pay one quarter of the cost of insurance.[131]

As factor in Amsterdam, Momber possessed a significant role in managing the duke's ships. Naturally, his chief remit was to 'sell our goods at the best conditions and for the most money', as well as to bargain 'for the goods we want to have […] then send them to Courland, or wherever we ask to send them to'.[132] Additionally, Momber acted as Jakob's insurance, his financier, and his news source, commenting on various ports beyond the Baltic and the changing prices of particular goods. On affairs concerning, the duke's own ships, Momber was incredibly thorough, providing detailed information on goods, recruitment, insurance, and shipping movement. In 1650, possibly his most

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[128] 'Marten Martenß lieget noch wartet nach bestendigen windt […] Auff die Policen nach Affrica wollen sie nicht asseuriren, oder daß gefahr von genommen zuwerden von der West Indischen Compagnia […] hoffe aber E:F:D schiffen keinen noth haben will frye schiffe seindt so hier nicht equippirt undt hollandisch folck auffhaben'. Letter from Hendrik Momber to Duke Jakob, 8 October 1650, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 709, fol. 144.
[129] Von Klopmann, 'Abrégé', (p.213). Letter from Nils von Staden to Charles II, undated, TNA: SP 88/15, Secretaries of State: State Papers Foreign, Poland and Saxony fol. 61.
[130] 'alles tot de civilijlste prijs te sien te krijgen'. Contract between Hendrik Momber and the Duke of Courland, 1 June 1650, NL-UtHUA: 32 Familie van Boetzlaer, inv. nr. 1085, fol. 3. This is a long version of the contract. A short version is available at LVVA: 7363, apr. 3, l. 439, fols. 3-4. This quote is only present in the long version.
[131] 'volgens onse ordre voorstellen zal' and 'hij krijght het ook van d'asseuradeurs of niet'. Contract between Hendrik Momber and the Duke of Courland, 1 June 1650, NL-UtHUA: 32 Familie van Boetzlaer, inv. nr. 1085, fols. 2-5; 'unsern ordern gemeß fortstellen solle' and 'er kriege es von der Asseurdeurs oder nicht'. Contract between Hendrik Momber and the Duke of Courland, 1 June 1650, LVVA: 7363, apr. 3, l. 439, fols. 3-4.
[132] 'Voorts onse goederen tot onsen beste op het duurste als hij kan verkopen' and 'Ook de goederen die wij begeeren […] en ons naer Courland versenden, of waar heen.' Contract between Hendrik Momber and the Duke of Courland, 1 June 1650, NL-UtHUA: 32 Familie Boetzlaer, inv. nr.1085, fol 2.
wij deselve te senden ordonneren.

enthusiastic period as Jakob's factor, the letters arrived at least once every three days.[133] Momber was assisted in his tasks by a selection of eight notaries, the most prominent of whom was Jacob van Swieten, the duke's official notary in Amsterdam.

Jakob's relationship with his Amsterdam factor was crucial but strained. By 1652, Momber complained that the duke had accumulated so much debt, that he was struggling to pay for it.[134] The discord between Jakob and Momber led to Courland's association with Joan van Wiquevoort, but when he, too, showed a reluctance to invest, Jakob attempted to repair his relations with Momber until the two were once again in regular correspondence by 1657. Momber remained in the service of the duke until the 1670s when Momber became impoverished due to his investments and the reluctance of the dukes to pay him what he was owed.[135] Arguments with the Amsterdam factor were not new to Jakob as his original representatives, Johannes Kampe and Georg Laubengier had also raised issue over pay. In 1649, they threatened to demonstrate the factor's significant management role over ducal shipping by calling in the ships *Wappen von Curland*, *Walfisch*, *Esperance*, *Rothe Löwe*, *Krokodil*, *Bär*, and *Luise Charlotte*.[136]

Whilst Momber was predominantly responsible for maintaining investment in Couronian shipping, Jakob's Copenhagen factor, Friedrich Pöpping held an equally significant role. The ships' accounts from 1654 to 1668, show Pöpping financing crew salaries and expenses almost as regularly as Momber.[137] His task of protecting the duke's ships during the war with Sweden was probably a result of Jakob's difficulties in Amsterdam. It also shows that the factors could adopt emergency responsibilities in times of upheaval, as Momber did so, admittedly erroneously, when he decided on the territorial matter of who maintained St Andreas Island in Jakob's absence. The letters from Pöpping and other Couronian representatives to the Elector of Brandenburg-Prussia offer fascinating insights into ducal shipping during the fall of its golden age. On 18 March 1659, the Copenhagen factor confirmed an agreement, requiring Friedrich Wilhelm to aid him in the costs of maintaining and repairing Courland's fleet.[138] Consequently, Friedrich Wilhelm received several letters documenting the whereabouts of Couronian ships, and in particular Couronian colonial ships.[139] The Great Elector

[133] Letters of Hendrik Momber to Duke Jakob regarding trade 1650-1653, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 709.
[134] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, pp. 518-519; Letters to Jan Huydecoper regarding the employment of Hendrik Momber, NL-UtHUA: NL-UtHUA): 67 Familie Huydecoper, inv. nr. 29.
[135] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, p. 760.
[136] Ibid., p. 54; Notary concerning a dispute between Duke Jakob, Johannes Kampe and Georg Laubengier, 2 June 1649, NL-SAA, 5075-38, inv.nr. 875, fol. 247. Notary: Jacob van Zwieten.
[137] Ships' Accounts, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 837.
[138] Contract between Friedrich Pöpping and Elector Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg-Prussia, 18 March 1659, GStA PK: I. HA Rep.9 Polen nr.7 e Fasz 2, fols. 17-17v.
[139] GStA PK: I. HA Rep.9 Polen nr.7 e Fasz 2.

was no stranger to receiving updates from his brother-in-law's factors. On 19 August 1652, Courland's factor in Danzig, Albrecht Löwen, informed Friedrich Wilhelm that

> 'the *Walfisch* […] has returned with a number of officials, bringing news, that they […] found a place, wherein there exists a lot of gold and on the River Gambia raised a fortress and manned the same with soldiers on an island where there was all manner of cattle tamed and wild, and grew rice'.[140]

Yet, from January 1659, the frequency of these updates intensified. On 14 January 1659, a letter from Amsterdam listed all Couronian ships and their locations. The list reads as follows:

> '*Prudentia* with 20 pieces[141] about 180 lasts to Amsterdam
>
> *Patentia* with 18 pieces ---------- 120 lasts to Amsterdam
>
> *Der Jünger Prins* 16 pieces ----------120 lasts is going to Portugal with freight
>
> *Fidelitas* with 14 pieces around 130 lasts is going to Hamburg
>
> *Princessin* with 20 pieces -------- 160 lasts is going to Hamburg, loaded and at sea.
>
> *Das Waffen von Kurland* with[142] pieces big 300 lasts, has been in Copenhagen for 6 to 8 years.
>
> *Pax* has never been here, I believe secured with 30 pieces and is 200 lasts big, has come from Tobago to reside in Copenhagen.
>
> *Clementia* with 6 pieces 70 to 80 lasts, destined for Gambia, lies in Copenhagen.
>
> *Temperantia* without pieces, around 100 lasts is in the Baltic Sea, seems to me taken by the Swedes, I understand from others that it should be in Memel.
>
> *Jager* a galley was loaded with goods in the Autumn in the Sound, taken and confiscated by the Swedes.
>
> *Lux* with 2 pieces, 100 last big to Danzig
>
> *Crocodil* around 80 lasts to Danzig
>
> *Levitas* quite big, unknown to me, or how it is mounted, situated in Danzig
>
> *Der Salm* a herring buss in Königsberg, is loaded and from there goes to France
>
> *Der Yslander* without pieces, 60 lasts to Lübeck
>
> *Hertzoginnen Waffen* in England – with about 24 pieces
>
> *Der Cavallier* a galley is going to the West Indies
>
> *Die Dame* a galley is going to the West Indies

[140] 'der Walfis […] ist Zurück kommen mit ezlichen Officianten, bringet Zeitung, das sie alda einen ohrt gefunden, darin viell goldeß verhanden unndt an der Revier Gambe eine Fortresse auffgeworfen dieselbe mit Soldaten besetzt auffs Eilandts da allerlei Vieh zahm unnd wildt sein soll unndt reihs wächset'. Letter from Albrecht Löwen to Elector Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg-Prussia, 19 August 1652, GStA PK: I. HA Rep.9 Polen nr.7 e Fasz 2, fol. 2.

[141] Canons.

[142] Gap where the amount of pieces should be is left in the original.

Die 3 Heringe a herring buss in Windau

The following ships have never been at sea and were reported to me:

A very big ship of over secured by over 60 pieces

Another which is about as big

Another of around 250 lasts

Another of around 180 lasts

Another 3 or 4 new big ships, the size of which is unknown to me'[143]

As noted previously, the writer of this memorial seems fixated upon not only the ships' capacity but also their weaponry. Pöpping clarifies the reason for this feature in his resolution to Brandenburg, clarifying: 'because the Couronian cannons on the ships are not being used advantageously, Your Serene Merciful Elector wants to enliven them and let the promised 5000 reichsthaler be turned, by His Royal Majesty, into the several iron pieces that are required, and to accept them as payment

[143] 'Prudentia mit 20 stücken ungefehr 180 Last zu Amsterdam
Patentia mit 18 stucken ---------- 120 last zu Amsterdam
Der jünger Prins 16 stucken ----------120 last ist nach Portugall aufs fracht
Fidelitas mit 14 stück ungefehr 130 last ist zu Hamburg
Princessin mit 20 stucken -------- 160 last ist von Hamburg befrachtet und in See.
Das Waffen von Kurland mit stücken groß 300 last hatt 6 a 8 Fahren zu Copenhagen gelagen.
Pax niehmahl hin gewesen vermeine 30 stücke sichert und 200 last groß ist von Tobago kommen lieget zu Copenhagen.
Clementia mit 6 stücken 70, 80 last gedestiniert nach Gambe lieget zu Copenhagen
Temperantia ohne stucken ungefehr 100 last in die Oost See ist mir herkommen von den Schweden genommen ist verstehe von anderen zu Memil sollte liegen.
Jager ein calliot ist in Herbst mit eingeladen gütern in den Sund von den schweden genommen und confisquiret
Lux mit 2 stücken groß 100 last zu dantzig
Crocodil ungefehr 80 last zu dantzig
Levitas zimlich groß mier unbewust, oder wie es gemontiert liegt zu dantzig
Der Salm ein heringbuyß zu Königbergen, ist befrachtet von dar nach Franckreich zu gehen
Der Yslander ohne stucken 60 last zu Lubeck
Hertzoginnen Waffen in Engeland – ungefehr mit 24 stücken
Der Cavallier ein galliot ist nach Westindien
Die Dame ein galliot ist nach Westindien
Die 3 Heringe ein heringbuyß zu der Windaw

Folgende schiffe sind niemahl in see gewesen und sind, wie mier berichtet ist:
Ein gar groß Schiff ümb uber 60 stucken zu sichern
Noch ein auch ungefehr so groß
Noch ein von ungefehr 250 last
Noch ein von ungefehr 180 last
Noch 3 oder 4 newe große schiffe, welcher große mier ünbewust'. Letter from Conrad Mollen to Great Elector Friedrich Wilhelm, 23 December 1658, GStA PK: I. HA Rep.9 Polen nr.7 e Fasz 2, fols. 14-14v.

instead'.[144] The cannons would thus pay off Courland's monetary debt to the Elector, but were otherwise not being used.

The list also provides a good indication of how many ducal ships were active during the duchy's busiest shipping decade of the seventeenth century. The document mentions a fleet of nineteen trading ships and there were seemingly seven or eight new vessels to be added, making twenty-six or twenty-seven altogether.[145] The most well-known estimates for the Couronian shipbuilding output in the reign of Duke Jakob is forty-four warships and seventy-nine trading ships. The figures reported to Brandenburg-Prussia cover a snapshot of that reign, but they do represent the peak of Couronian maritime power. It thus appears the often-quoted numbers from the historiography are somewhat exaggerated.[146]

The list from Amsterdam was followed by another list of ships, written by Pöpping. The document names the location of ships but also the factors who were supervising them:

'Factor in Holland, Hendrick Momber
Patentia 30 st. [pieces]
Prudentia 30 st.
Temperantia
Die Dame 6 st. } whether they were arrested from the West Indies
Der Cavalier 6 st.}

In Hamburg before this Vincent Klingenberg
Der Junge Printz 40 st.
Fidelitas 15 st. but I could be mistaken

In Lübeck factor Berendt Freß
König David 32 st.
Ißländer- 15 st.
Drey Hering

[144] 'Weilen daß Curlandische Geschütz auff Schiffen zugebrauchen nicht dienlich, wollen Ew. Churfürstl. Durchl. Gnadigst beleben laßen, von Ihr Kögl. Maytt alhier auff die versprochenen 5000 Rdlr etzliche benöhtigte Eisern Stücke proeniren zu laßen, und selbige an statt der Zahlung alßdann zu acceptiren'. Contract between Friedrich Pöpping and Elector Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg-Prussia, 18 March 1659, GStA PK: I. HA Rep.9 Polen nr.7 e Fasz 2, fol. 17v.
[145] Letter from Conrad Mollen to Great Elector Friedrich Wilhelm, 23 December 1658, GStA PK: I. HA Rep.9 Polen nr.7 e Fasz 2, fols. 14-14v.
[146] Kirby, *Northern Europe*, p.271; Henning, *Geschichte der Stadt Goldingen*, pp. 35-36; Jakovļeva, 'Mythos und Realität', (p .89).

The fourth is unknown to me, but reports say it should be there.

In Dantzig factor Albrecht Low

Luchs 15 st.

Crocodil 12 st.

In Copenhagen Friedrich Pöpping

Pax- 32 st.

Clementia 12 st.

In England unknown to me

Louise de Charlotte 40 st.

In Königsberg

Der Lachs

In my time met with misfortune

Wallfisch – 30 st.

Constantia 32 st.

Jäger- 6 st. Taken by Sweden and is situated in Lübeck

Wapen von Curl. 32 st.

Concordia- 12 st. Burnt by the Swedes

Seven princely ships are situated in Windau with '*Pazkul*''[147]

[147] 'In hollandt factor Hendrich Momber
Patentia von 30 st.
Prudentia von 30 st.
Temperantia
Die dame 6 st. { ob sie auß Westindien gearrestiert
Der Cavalier 6 st.

In Hamburg vor diesen Vincent Klingenberg
Der Junge Printz 40 st.
Fidelitas 15 st. Könnten aber mehr aufgesetzet werden

In Lubeck Factor Berendt Freß
König David 32 st.
Ißländer- 15 st.
Drey Hering
daß vierdte mir unbekandt den bericht nach aber da seyn soll.

In his letter, Pöpping indicates that the network of factors, like that of the diplomats, was a broad and ever-growing web of relations. Many of the ships were anchored in ports scattered across Northern Europe and Pöpping noted the factors present in Amsterdam, Lübeck, Danzig, Hamburg, as well as Copenhagen where he resided. He also mentioned ships in Königsberg, where he neglected to name the factor, and London where he admitted the name of the factor was 'unknown to me'.[148] This shows an impressive network, considering that it emanated from a provincial duchy. However, there are some signs of its weakness. The network is constrained to the Baltic and North seas. This, of course, was an indication of where Courland's boats were stranded, however, it appears that Pöpping's knowledge did not spread very far beyond these spaces. His ignorance of the London factor's identity and the fact that Momber had been replaced in Amsterdam by van Wicquefort, indicates that the factors were not engaging in intensive communication. Nevertheless, Pöpping's list reveals the ports where the duke was most likely to obtain cargo, investment, and people for his expanding roster of vessels.

This new list adds two further ships, *König David* and *Luise Charlotte*, raising the total of contemporaneous vessels to twenty-one with seven, rather than eight, at the wharf in Windau. The two documents mention four Couronian ships which were actively pursuing trade with colonial outposts: *Dame*, *Cavalier*, *Pax* and *Clementia*. Many more of the ships listed also undertook similar journeys into the Atlantic, which is not surprising given naval crafts often travelled in pairs or as a

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In Dantzig Factor Albrecht Low
Luchs 115 st
Crocodil 112 st

In Copenhagen Friedrich Pöpping
Pax- 32 st.
Clementia 112 st.

In Engelandt mir unbekandt
Louise de Charlotte 40 st.

In Königsberg
Der Lachs

In meiner Zeit verunglücket
Wallfisch – 30 st.
Constantia 32 st.
Jäger- 6 st. die Schweden genommen und lieget zu Lubeck
Wapen von Curl. 32 st.
Concordia- 12 st. Die schweden verbrandt

Sieben Fürste Schiffe liegen zur Windau bey Pazkul'. Letter from Friedrich Pöpping to the court of Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg-Prussia, GStA PK: I. HA Rep.9 Polen nr.7 e Fasz 2, fol. 18v.

[148] 'mir unbekandt'. Ibid.

three. Piecing together the whole of Courland's colonial shipping history, one can add at least twenty-nine further boats to the five mentioned in the pamphlets of 1668. The list is as follows:

Ship	Journey Notes
Blumentopf	September 1668, sailed with *Islandfahrer* to Tobago but did not arrive. Second journey to Tobago under Johan Nagel in 1681, sold to Algerian corsairs.
Cavalier	June 1658, Courland to Tobago under Willem Mollens. Traded in Africa February 1659. Presumed lost in Jamaica.
Concordia	April 1654- June 1655, Courland to Gambia and back under Jurgen Janssen and Rolof Tijsen. Returned to Gambia with Wilhelm Halbertsen December 1655 to October 1657. Burnt by Swedes 1658.
Constantia	January 1655- December 1655, Courland to Tobago and back under Jacob Ross. Same journey with Jacob Albertsen September 1656 to November 1657.
Dame	December 1657, Courland to Tobago under Nicholas de Brion. Returned to Courland on unknown date. Courland to Tobago June 1658, presumed lost.
Das Wappen der Herzogin von Kurland	Almost rented in Portugal for Brazil trade, 1650. Established colony on Tobago under Willem Mollens, August 1654. Returned to Courland before sailing for Tobago under Jan Brandt, August 1655.
De Hoop	Visited Saint-Martin in 1645.
Einhorn	Travelled for Tobago under Christian van der Heyde. Turned back at Copenhagen in November 1675 due to cold weather.
Esperance	Sailed to Tobago under Thomas Rassyn and then Cornelis Gilde. Returned to Baltic upon finding no colonists in October 1683.
Fidelitas	Travelled to Gambia under Heinrich Caspersen, Spring 1657.
Fortitude	Captured on the way back from Tobago by Sweden 1659.
Fortuna	Potential first voyage to Western coast of Africa 1645.
Fortuna	Sailed under Pieter Lübke to Tobago, arrived June 1686. Mortgaged by Barthold Otto Schmoll in Boston, July 1687.
Große Chur von Windau	Part of Jacob du Moulin's aborted journey to Gambia, 1652.
Hirschbock	Courland to Tobago under Wybrandt Staets in July 1681 and 1684.
Isländer (often called *Islandfahrer*)	Slaving trip to Africa 10 June 1656, returned October 1657. Intended to travel to Tobago in 1658 under Jelle Helles but stayed in Lübeck, due to the Swedish invasion. Voyage to Gambia November 1662-March 1663. Detained in Copenhagen in 1675 having intended to travel to Tobago.

Islandfahrer (often called *Isländer*)	Courland to Tobago and back under Moritz Carstens, September 1668. Captured by Dunkerque privateers travelling to Tobago via Newcastle, 1677.
Jacobus Minor	Captured on journey back from Tobago by Sweden 1659.
Jäger	Courland to Tobago, August 1655 under Peter Friedrichsen. Captured by Sweden and taken to Lübeck, 1658.
Jäger von Tobago	Sent with *Wappen von Tobago*. Arrived in Tobago, 6 May 1687, captained by Wybrandt Staets. Returned having found no colonists.
Jäger von Tobago	Not to be confused with the above. Captained by Jan Cornelsen and sent to Tobago from Norway with Dietrich von Altenbockum and Abraham Marin in August 1687. Wrecked on Tobago in October 1687.
König David	Arrived in Tobago in October 1658 under Jacob Albertsen.
Krokodil	Courland to Gambia under Pieter Schulte, September 1651 to July 1652. Sent to Gambia under Jacob du Moulin in 1652. Mutinied in Norway, March 1653.
Leopard	Traded in Gambia in April 1653 where Captain Claes Fredrichsen died. Traded in Martinique before the replacement captain, Cornelis Frederichsen, died in St Christopher. Captured in Bristol.
Möwe	Left Courland for Newcastle 27 December 1670 under Asmus Möller. Traded for slaves in Africa before heading to Caribbean. Diverted to Martinique by a storm. Arrested by the Governor of the French Antilles, 1672.
Patentia	Part of the aborted mission to Gambia by Jacob du Moulin, 1652. Arrived in Courland, March 1653. Sent to Gambia under Phillip von Seitz 6 May 1654. Voyage abandoned in Hamburg May 1655 after returning from Gambia.
Pax	Courland to Tobago under Andreas Bohm and Marten Martens, 1656 to July 1657. Returned to Copenhagen, October 1658.
Pietas	Courland to Gambia, September 1651. Captured briefly by the English during the First Anglo-Dutch War. Courland to Gambia and back, May 1653 to August 1655. Visited Sierra Leone in October 1654. Intended to trade slaves on Gold Coast for Buenos Aires in 1659, but captured by WIC.
Prinzessin	Courland to Gambia and back, June 1654 to October 1655 under Wilhelm Halbertsen and Jelle Helles.
Prudentia	Courland to Gambia and back, Summer/ Autumn 1653 to August 1655 under Marten Martens. Courland to Tobago, September 1657 to 1658.
Rose	Taken by French privateers while en route to Tobago in 1677.
Schwan	Sent to Tobago June/ July 1681 under Andres Hamelton.

Sereine	Ship carrying slaves from Gorée to Tobago in 1683 under 'Cornel Gilde'.[149] Potentially refers to the *Esperance*.
Walfisch	Possible voyage to Africa 1649. Courland to Gambia and back, 3 September 1651- July 1652 under Willem Mollens. Briefly captured by WIC in Elmina, March 1652, and possibly by the Dutch Admiralty in October 1652. Returned to Gambia under Johan Jacob Schote, June 1654. Returned by October 1655.
Wappen von Tobago	Courland to Tobago, July 1686 to April 1687. Shipwrecked in the Faroe Islands.

This list presents the engagement the dukes of Courland exercised through the use of maritime transportation. Given that the Couronian fleet operated at a capacity of around twenty-five to thirty ships, the footprint of colonial expeditions was large. As Couronian documentation suggests, some ships and captains sailed across the Atlantic with a degree of regularity. However, a feature that was also regular was the danger and uncertainty which ducal vessels faced. It was very common for a Couronian ship to at least be held by a foreign power whilst in colonial service. Some faced alternative problems for instance ruinous weather or failing to find any Couronian colonists. To mitigate these disturbances, robust diplomacy and financial security was required. The duke did not always manage such an outcome as rival powers grew ever more concerned with Courland's colonial intrusions.

Conclusion

The ships' crew lists, and the evidence of the Sound Toll shows the growing diversification of Couronian maritime activity. Shipping patterns of foreign vessels which travelled to and from Courland, portray the Baltic status quo from which the Dukes of Courland wished to break. Trade here was of overwhelmingly Dutch or Frisian origin with only minor deviations. Perpetuating these long-standing trends was not useful for the dukes for establishing their prestige, as they often depended on grain export, rather than mercantile or colonial goods.[150] As a significant entrepôt, Amsterdam still held significant interest for ducal ships, which often stopped there to be crewed, repaired, and supplied. Factors in Amsterdam were often crucial for financing colonial voyages. Nevertheless, Amsterdam clearly did not hold such a tight grip over Couronian trade as it did on foreign shipping. Couronian ships, particularly in the latter half of the seventeenth century, bypassed

[149] Andrea Weindl, 'The Slave Trade of Northern Germany from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries', in *Extending the Frontiers Essays on the New Transatlantic Slave Trade Database*, eds. David Eltis and David Richardson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 250-270 (p. 251).
[150] Yevstratyev, 'Colonial Reality', (pp. 1140-1141).

Amsterdam to receive salt direct from France. They frequented Oldenburg to provide aid, and they visited Denmark-Norway, to utilise opportunities to take on iron as well as personnel.

The backgrounds of the ships' captains presented a wide range of experience, with some from Baltic backgrounds, and others hired for the sole purpose of traversing the Atlantic. Captains hailed from a variety of ports in Northern Europe, including Couronian ships. The crews reflect the importance of the Baltic, particularly Scandinavia and Northern Germany, in manning Couronian vessels. The gateway to the Baltic was the most fruitful place to recruit new sailors. Thus, colonial crews indicated the essential nature of exiting the Baltic, but the composition of the crew often utilised trans-Baltic connections. The diversity of Couronian crews, both on colonial and European journeys, was not unique. Dutch, Danish, English, and many other colonial endeavours obtained crewmembers from a broad selection of ports. The origins of these crewmembers reflected the places where the captain possessed the most connections, as well as the ports in which Couronian vessels most frequently anchored. Crews were often recruited as and when they were required; mortality rates and dismissals often meant that ships searched for additional crewmembers in the ports they passed. As a natural stopping off point, the Danish Sound Toll was a convenient place to look for additional crew. The general lack of expertise for long-distance shipping in Courland as well as the low population, meant that recruiting outside of the duchy was essential.

An increase in Couronian shipping activity is very evident in the 1650s, but it faltered because of the Swedish invasion in 1658 and had only partially recovered by the 1680s. The overall rise in Couronian voyages enabled the duchy to be known as a maritime power and a provider of useful goods beyond grain. The fruits of trading deals in Western Europe can be seen in the diversification of destinations in Courland's shipping. The greater frequency of maritime journeys, particularly beyond the Sound, also expanded Courland's exposure to sources of maritime expertise. This enabled the dukes to send ships out to the Atlantic. The size of Courland's fleet has typically been exaggerated, yet the number of vessels engaged in Couronian colonial pursuits was impressive, considering that Courland rarely sent any boats beyond the Sound Toll before 1643. The lack of success of these journeys was frequently a problem for the duke's factors who struggled to cover the costs of such an ambitious shipping programme.

Chapter Four: Expanding Colonisation to the Atlantic

Courland's new ocean-faring ships provided the means for ducal activity to stretch beyond the Baltic and into the vast horizon of the Atlantic. Here a multitude of opportunities- and possibilities to fail- stretched out before them. The vessels sailed loaded with commodities, hopeful that these could provide the means to build networks, societies, and trade in challenging tropical environments. The ability to colonise did not just rest on vehicles and objects. Power also came with people and Courland's boats were also stocked full of these: soldiers, colonists, officials, and slaves.

Besides the frequent movements of ships, petitions to Western Europe attempted to emphasise the duke's rightful colonial place by highlighting the numbers of personnel being pumped into Couronian forts and plantations. The 120 soldiers and 80 families carried by Mollens in May 1654; the 280 people transported by Jacob Albertsen; and the 120 people travelling in Andre Bohm's ship, were the people expected to stamp Jakob and Courland's name into the geography of Tobago.[1] Likewise, the garrison of 100 soldiers recruited by Deniger, as well as the forty men hired by du Moulin, sailed to Africa in the hope that they could preserve a Couronian presence on St Andreas Island.[2] The origins and organisation of these people is the subject of this chapter. Charting their backgrounds and experiences, I seek to determine the character of Kettler colonialism in practice and whether it had any distinguishing features to set it apart from contemporary colonial regimes in Africa and the Caribbean.

The main sources informing this chapter are the colonial plans formulated in the metropole, coupled with descriptions given by the participants and witnesses of Couronian activity abroad. Plans from the metropole often present an idealistic picture of how a colony should have run. The numbers mentioned above are examples of this. Wollebæk rather naively suggested, on the evidence of these figures, that by 1658 Tobago housed a population of 900 colonist families.[3] This is extremely unlikely as personnel could very easily go missing for various reasons, chiefly a high mortality. On Schulte's voyage between October 1651 and Spring 1652 to the River Gambia at least five died, whilst many were incapacitated for several days through illness.[4] More dramatically, a Dutch letter asserted that forty out of ninety Couronian farmers had died on Tobago in the late 1650s.[5] If a situation became desperate, colonists would also attempt to escape. Mutinying was another option. Further colonists were sold into slavery, shipwrecked, or simply did not make it the Atlantic.

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[1] Historical Society of Trinidad and Tobago. 'A Pamphlet', pp. 1-3.
[2] Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus,* p. 169; Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, p. 298.
[3] Alf Wollebæk, 'Tobago og den Kurlandske Kolonisasjon' in *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of Geography* 6:8 (1936), 460-466 (p. 464).
[4] Mattiesen, 'Ein Tagebuch'.
[5] Mattiesen, *Kolonial und Überseepolitik*, p.478.

Much of the archival documentation points to aspirational ambitions. The most detailed plans that we possess regarding the day-to-day administration of ducal colonies are the plans for a joint Brandenburgish- Couronian colonisation of Tobago in 1691 and the proposals put to the merchants of Rotterdam in 1699.[6] Neither of these projects were ever realised. Similarly, the most detailed instructions issued by Duke Jakob are the 1652 documents addressed to du Moulin and the 1670 papers delivered to de Lech and Bennet.[7] Again, neither vision of the future came to fruition, as du Moulin stalled in Copenhagen and Bennet's journey was interrupted by the French capture of *Möwe*. Such documents are not superfluous to this enquiry as they illustrate the way the dukes conceptualised their colonies. They also offer a clear point of comparison between the colonial approach of the dukes and outposts created by other European polities. However, the fact that the dukes failed in the realisation of these colonial strategies, illustrates that they were not the decisive influence on how the Couronian presence manifested itself in the Atlantic.

As we have seen throughout this thesis, historiography has often linked significant ideas to Jakob. This has often involved presenting Courland's colonies as comparatively liberal with their religious tolerance and emancipation of serfs.[8] Osterhammel wrote that governance of colonies often differed from the metropole; his main example being the lack of liberalism in colonial activity.[9] The administration of Courland's colonies differed very sharply from rule in the duchy. Yet, the colonies, from a colonist's perspective, may have been considered more liberal than the metropole, because of the reasons outlined by some of the historians who are more positive about the freedoms present in ducal colonies.[10] The strand of historiography which saw the Kettler colonies as comparatively liberal entities contrasts with notions that they were arenas for absolutist control, which is one way in which Mattiesen viewed them as distinctive.[11] Such arguments, incorporating notions of republicanism, mercantilism and Yevstratyev's cameralist interpretation, relate strongly to debates surrounding Jakob's political motivations.[12] As a private ducal project, ducal ideas are important for understanding how the metropole envisioned Atlantic colonialism. Contrastingly, as a venture implemented by many different actors, we can also question if there was a disconnect between these ideas and reality.

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[6] Contract between Brandenburg and Courland about Tobago, 4 May 1691, GStA PK: I. HA Rep.9 Polen nr.7 e 1, fols. 55-58v.; Suggestions from the Envoy of Courland, 30 October 1699. NL-RtGAR: 33-01 Handschriften Verzameling Rotterdam, inv. nr. 3226, fols. 48-49.
[7] Correspondence of Jacob du Moulin, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l .849; Jakob Kettler's Instructions to Governors Robert Bennet and Johann de Lech, 1 November 1670, LVVA: 554, apr. 2, l. 2621, fols. 12-18.
[8] Andersons, *Senie Kurzemnieki Amerikā*; Berkis, *The Reign of Duke James,* pp. 77-78.
[9] Osterhammel, Colonialism, p. 57.
[10] Spekke, *History of Latvia*, p. 248; Andersons, *Senie Kurzemnieki Amerikā.*
[11] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, p. 4.
[12] Yevstratyev, 'Colonial Reality'.

As a result of the interest inherent in the historiography, of national identities, the study of the colonists themselves has often concerned the extent to which they can be placed into a national framework. This reading had included links to Latvian and Polish national narratives, as well as German imperial narratives.[13] There have also been studies which emphasise that the ducal project was not possible without foreign expertise and that this was a crucial part of Courland's development and aggrandisement.[14] The previous chapter asserted that sailors had diverse, mostly Baltic and Northern European backgrounds. This type of localised diversity is also reflected in the colonists themselves. This chapter will also investigate the origins of individuals. The aim of this approach is not to prove that one ethnicity was particularly prevalent, but to indicate the background of knowledge from which Couronian colonists originated. Backgrounds also reveal other identities such as religious, professional, and social identities. These are also important for determining what the character of Courland's outposts were, as well as the places the dukes looked to find colonial competency.

The final section of this chapter will focus on where Couronian colonialism fits in with other modes of colonialism in the seventeenth century. Yevstratyev, following from previous historiographies, placed Couronian colonialism under the umbrella of Baltic colonialism which distinguishes Atlantic colonisation originating in the Baltic region from Iberian and Northern European colonialisms.[15] However he also sees ducal outposts as 'typical point settlement[s]', small possessions which seek to exploit economic opportunity from a larger hinterland. He saw innovation but only in semi-autonomous and republican tendencies on Tobago, which were present in plans that were not pursued. Some writers on Couronian colonialism note that the duke's tendency towards a so-called 'republican' system of governance on Tobago, set it apart from any other form of colonialism in the region.[16] This conclusion has been challenged by historians such as Eric Williams, who characterised European colonisation as broadly similar in its exploitation, and those like W.R. Menkman, who compared Couronian plans to several precedents in the Caribbean.[17]

Ultimately, Couronian colonial outposts did not exist long enough to develop a particular character or system. Thus, our conclusions on distinctiveness will always be limited. However, what we can glean can build a picture of how actors from a Baltic space synthesised their own personal experience with the precedent of other colonisers and encounters in an Atlantic space. This picture shows that unique

[13] Sooman et al., 'From the Port of Ventspils', (p. 516); Będkowski, 'Nowa Kurlandia'; Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, p. 1.
[14] Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*; Jakovļeva, 'Industry in Early Modern Times'.
[15] Yevstratyev, 'Colonial Reality', (p. 1137).
[16] Ibid., p.1139; Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, p. 22.
[17] Williams, *History of the People*, p.52; Menkman, 'Stukken Betrekkelijk het Eiland Tabago', (p. 83).

details about colonial structure were present, but that overall, notions of exceptionality are exaggerated.

Sailor Governors, Military Governors, and Diplomat Governors: The Leaders of Courland's Outposts

The first men to whom Duke Jakob entrusted governorship, and thus the responsibility of building Courland's first fortresses, possessed dual roles, as they were also sea captains. Willem Mollens and Pieter Schulte both appear as captains in the Sound Toll. Schulte's role as captain and commander also stretched to a role as an ambassador and trader. As governor, he conversed with local *mansas* to obtain their clemency. He also accompanied the trade commissioner, Simon Jansen, to obtain goods from marketplaces along the river.[18] Despite Schulte's various responsibilities, he was accompanied by a substantial team. Among them was Joachim Deniger, with his experience in Brazil and the WIC; Major Heinrich Fock, who led the garrison; Gottschalk Ebeling, the colony's pastor; and Mollens, who joined the expedition to find trade to the south.

Mollens had gained his maritime experience in Courland itself, having shipped goods to France in the 1640s and early 1650s.[19] Accompanying Schulte to Gambia and the Gold Coast, provided Mollens with some useful experience for running slaving missions. He attempted this task in 1658 when he sailed the *Cavalier* to Axim. It is difficult to determine, however, how Jakob decided that Mollens was sufficiently competent to manage a landed, plantation community. One reason may be that the continuity of leadership between sea and land was considered beneficial.

Mollens is often categorised as a Dutchman and thus part of the duke's drive to obtain Dutch expertise. However, there are clues which hint at an alternative heritage. In August 1654, Mollens wrote his first update, explaining how he had established his colony on Tobago, and how he had built up relations with the Amerindians there. The letter is written in Dutch but notably poor Dutch.[20] Either Mollens commanded a low standard of literacy, or he was not Dutch. Furthermore, when Governor Ruijghaver of Elmina detained Mollens in March 1652, the WIC commander was not interested in the captain's Dutch heritage, but focused on Jan Brandt.[21] According to Zeuske and Ludwig, 'Guillaume Molens' was from the city of Danzig.[22] It may well have been the case that the Mollens family had a trading presence in Danzig, however, one wonders why Mollens would have attempted Dutch to the German-speaking duke if he were a native of that port. It is more plausible that

[18] Mattiesen, 'Ein Tagebuch'.
[19] Sound Toll Registers Online. *www.soundtoll.nl*.
[20] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, pp. 451-452.
[21] Copies of correspondence between Director General Ruijghaver and Willem Mollens, 9-10 March 1652, NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01 Oude West-Indische Compagnie, inv. nr. 13A, fols. 214-223.
[22] Michael Zeuske and Jörg Ludwig (eds.), 'Amerikanische Kolonialwaren und Wirtschaftspolitik in Preußen und Sachsen: Prolegomena (17./18. und Frühes 19. Jahrhundert)' in *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Lateinamerikas – Anuario de Historia de America Latina* 32:1 (1995), 257-301 (p. 263).

he was English. The notes taken in Elmina very clearly state this information. 'This William Molens, an Englishman, who, before this, has served the Prince of Courland'.[23] If Mollens were to have been English, it might be easier to understand why he fled to the English colony of Jamaica. In 1669, a William Molins was mentioned as a representative of the people of St Jago de la Vega on the island.[24]

As Mollens presided over the most stable period of Couronian colonisation, he survived long enough in his position to be recalled to report in Mitau. Mollens returned to Courland in early 1657, having been replaced by Wolfert Brederode van Kloetingen. The new governor was the first Couronian governor not to have captained the ship upon which he arrived; *Constantia* was skippered by Jacob Albertsen. Brederode possessed a completely different social standing to Mollens and Schulte. The name Brederode, is a prominent name in Dutch history. The twelfth lord, Hendrik II, led the original rebellion against the Spanish in 1566 and the sixteenth lord, Joan Wolfert, led the state army and wielded a vote in the States General until his death in 1655.[25] Wolfert was part of an illegitimate line, emanating from his grandfather, Walraven van Brederode van Cloetinge, bastard son of Lord Wolfert and half-brother to Hendrik II. Wolfert's obscure links to a prestigious family, may have been seen as an asset in the United Provinces, seeing as he still carried the family name. He also seems to have been valued for his military expertise.

The hiring of Wolfert van Brederode marked the first departure from hiring captains as governors. The experience Jakob suffered with du Moulin and von Seitz caused a major restructure in who was entrusted with responsibility for the colonies. Du Moulin's expedition is probably the most well-documented journey, undertaken by a Couronian governor.[26] Du Moulin, a ship's captain from the United Provinces, departed in late 1652 with the convoy of *Krokodil*, *Patentia*, and *Grosse Chur von Windau*. Like Schulte, he was surrounded by men deemed to have Atlantic experience. Among them was Don Francisco Marco de Maghellas, a Portuguese merchant, who would be able to communicate with the influential Luso-African trading diaspora in Senegambia.[27] In a similar role, was an African man who had been brought to Courland by Schulte's expedition, according to the Danzig factor, Albrecht Löwen, the brother-in-law of 'the King of Angola'. He accompanied the expedition to facilitate commerce.[28] Deniger also sailed with the new governor, having been given the brief to

[23] 'dese William Molens een Engelsman, welcke voor desen, den vorst van Coerland'. Copy of a note on Willem Mollens by the fort of Elmina, 3 February 1659, NL-HaNA, 1.05.14 Inventaris van het Nederlandse Bezittingen ter Kust van Guinea, inv.nr. 81, scan 60.
[24] Anon, *The Laws of Jamaica: Comprehending all the Acts in Force Passed between the First-Year of the Reign of King George the Third and the Thirty-Second Year of the Reign of King George the Third, Inclusive* (St Jago de la Vega: Alexander Aikman, 1802), p. 43.
[25] 'The Castle and the Lords of Brederode' (2021). https://ruinevanbrederode.nl/en/history/ [Accessed 18 August 2021].
[26] Correspondence of Jacob du Moulin, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l .849.
[27] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, p. 181.
[28] Diederichs, *Herzog Jacobs*, p.31; 'König von Angola'. Letter from Albrecht Löwen to Elector Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg-Prussia, 19 August 1652, GStA PK: I. HA Rep.9 Polen nr.7 e Fasz 2, fol. 2.

recruit soldiers for the fortress. He recruited at various points of the Baltic route, including from Riga, Danzig, and Copenhagen.[29] The fourth assistant to du Moulin did not possess African experience. Friedrich Wilhelm Trotta von Treiden may have been the only Couronian nobleman, outside of the ducal council, to have served the duke's colonial endeavours, and he acted as du Moulin's deputy, commanding the *Patentia*. The name Treiden inspires thoughts of Treiden in Swedish Livonia, but the largest Trotta estate was in Warven, south of Windau. He offered a tangible connection between the duke's colonies and Courland's noble political system.

Trotta von Treiden's heavily criticised his superior. '[D]u Moulin handles your Excellency's affairs like a light-hearted knave', he wrote on 15 December 1652.[30] Maghelles supported his colleague's assessment, adding, 'it is bad to live with him, he is never sober.'[31] Du Moulin's crew had good reason to be disquieted. He was known to the Danish and Holstein authorities as a troublemaker, with heavy debts. On 27 October 1652, Frederick III of Denmark warned Jakob that he could not allow du Moulin to recruit soldiers in Denmark. This was a major blow to the duke as he had granted du Moulin wide powers to recruit soldiers in Denmark and miners from Norway.[32]

Du Moulin's efforts to solve his debt problems caused further difficulties. The governor attempted to sell the *Krokodil*'s iron, much to Maghelles' dismay as it was a vital commodity in European-African trade.[33] The new governor also borrowed 1,300 reichsthaler from Pöpping in Copenhagen, which, according to Trotta von Treiden, only 60 crewmembers ever saw.[34] Eventually the crew mutinied; Trotta von Treiden explained to the duke, 'our supply of butter, bread, stock fish and everything else no longer exists'.[35]

The debacle with du Moulin represented an embarrassing failure of recruitment. Jakob seems to have been unaware that du Moulin was in such trouble with Denmark and the Duchy of Holstein, two polities with which he communicated closely. Danish clemency was vital for transit out of the Baltic. Jakob's failure with du Moulin was followed very quickly by another significant blunder with the appointment of Philipp von Seitz. Von Seitz was a Danish adventurer, who apparently had personal connections with Luise Charlotte.[36] He also had significant debts which he sought to pay off with the duke's goods. In May 1655, the governor abandoned his post by fleeing with 15,000 reichsthaler's worth of goods on the outskirts of Hamburg.[37] The previous month, his crew had complained that he

[29] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, p. 183.
[30] 'du Moulin handelt an E.F.D. als ein leichtfertiger Kerl'. Diederichs, *Herzog Jacobs*, p.33.
[31] 'Es ist bös leben mit ihm, weil er nimmer nüchtern ist', ibid.
[32] Letter from Frederick III of Denmark to Duke Jakob, 27th October 1652, LVVA: 554, apr. 2, l. 2982, fol. 8.
[33] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p.81.
[34] Gray, *A History of the Gambia*, p. 43.
[35] Ibid., p. 44.
[36] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p.82.
[37] Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*, p. 174.

had not provided them with sufficient provisions to last the return journey to Windau. Some historians imply that von Seitz escaped Couronian service on the way to Gambia, as opposed to the other direction.[38] This was clearly not the case as the incident happened exactly a year after he first departed Courland. One of Jakob's trading representatives on St Andreas Island, Nicholaes Groenewout, also reported that he arrived on the River Gambia on 25 November 1654.[39] In doing so, von Seitz replaced a previous governor, Gerrit Kraijvanger, a former bookkeeper in the WIC who served as governor for just over a year.[40]

According to Eckert, it was this incident which prompted a restructuring in 1656. This adjustment entailed the separation of the roles of governor and director of commerce. Whereas the governor managed the relations with the fortresses' neighbours and constructed the defence policies of the outpost, the director of commerce organised the receipts of commissioners, responsible for different sectors of trade.[41] The position of director of commerce was taken by Deniger, however, he did not operate from Gambia, but from Hamburg. On the Baltic, Deniger worked with Momber to coordinate transport to both the colonies in Tobago and Gambia. He was granted the right to trade 1,000 reichsthalers in his own name and had responsibility over military activities in both outposts. It is questionable how he was able to achieve this from Hamburg. Deniger did return to Africa in 1657, however he died soon after conducting a mission to Kassan.[42] It is not clear if a director of commerce existed within the fortress itself or if the role of senior trader changed in any way. Senior traders can be identified up to at least March 1655, but beyond this we are ignorant as to who filled this position, or if it was deemed unnecessary alongside the role of director of commerce. It should be noted that two or three people holding the position of commis existed on the island until the Amsterdam takeover in 1659.

The first senior trader was Simon Jansen, a Dutchman who was present in St Andreas from October 1651 until March 1654. He was apparently an experienced merchant in Africa and Schulte's diary portrays him industriously obtaining goods of both practical and commercial use. Despite Jansen's experience, his tenure was not considered successful as he left the outpost 450 iron bars in debt.[43] Nicolaes Groenewout, another Dutchman, replaced Jansen in May 1654. The new trader also had experience in Western Africa, having served with the WIC at Fort Elmina. Two months after his arrival, Groenewout led an enterprising expedition to the Sierra Leone River to establish a trading

[38] Gray, *A History of the Gambia*, p. 44.
[39] Diary of Nicolaes Groenewout, 1653-1655, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 850b; Diederichs, *Herzog Jacobs*, p.38.
[40] Diary of Nicolaes Groenewout, 1653-1655, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 850b
[41] Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*, p. 174.
[42] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, pp. 290-292.
[43] Mattiesen, 'Ein Tagebuch'; Diary of Nicolaes Groenewout, 1653-1655, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 850b, fol. 20.

post. Groenewout worked on the river, in tandem with Mathijs Requet, yet another trader from Amsterdam. Groenewout left for Courland in March 1655.[44]

It is possible that the role held by these Dutchmen was subsumed into the newly created role of the director. Presumably, from 1655, Governor Stiel, did not carry out as many trading missions as Governor Schulte. By choosing Stiel and Deniger as Courland's leadership pairing, Jakob opted for reliability and continuity. Deniger had proven experience across the Atlantic and had been loyal to Courland on all other expeditions. Stiel appears to have been a long-term resident of St Andreas, having arrived with Trotta von Trieden in late 1654. Stiel is particularly remembered for his loyalty to the duke; Spekke named him 'one of the most loyal servants man could desire'.[45] One reason for this assessment is Stiel's refusal to recognise Momber's lease of St Andreas to the Amsterdam chamber on 4 February 1659. Stiel's protestations proved in vain as his garrison baulked at the idea of combatting the WIC when their provisions and pay were so uncertain.[46] Stiel protested the arrangement on his arrival in Amsterdam on 9 October 1659, gaining support from the WIC's Groningen chamber. Groningen even provided him with a boat when it became apparent that the Amsterdam expedition had lost the island.[47]

Stiel left from Texel for Gambia on 20 April 1660, accompanied by a new group of soldiers, hired by a repentant Momber.[48] Amsterdam ships once again forced Stiel to leave in June 1660. On 2 August 1660 the Kingdom of Barra, possibly with his aid, helped to reinstate him by chasing away the Dutch representatives. Stiel began losing personnel to disease; his garrison was still very badly supplied as the metropole was in no fit state to help its outposts despite Jakob's release. When Captain Holmes came for Stiel's fortress, the governor only had seven people at his disposal, although, typically of Stiel he still fired warning shots before surrendering.[49] Stiel's dedication to the duke's cause is noteworthy, considering the attitude of his predecessors. Nationally minded historians, such as Berķis and Spekke hold him up as an example of how a native Courlander would fight for the duke's success; the antithesis to figures such as Schulte, du Moulin, and von Seitz.[50] This argument, however, does not stand up. Dutch sources on the struggle for St Andreas identify Stiel as a native of Lüneburg in Northern Germany.[51] Origin was therefore not an indicator of loyalty.

[44] Diary of Nicolaes Groenewout, 1653-1655, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 850b.
[45] Spekke, *History of Latvia*, p. 78.
[46] Balcerek, *Dawne Kurlandzkie Fortyfikacje*, p. 4.
[47] Notary concerning Otto Stiel obtaining a ship to sail to the Gambia, 9 October 1659, NL-SAA: 5075-54, inv. nr. 1309, p. 37. Notary: Hendrik Schaef.
[48] Hugo Sewigh, 'Eine Kurländische Colonie' in *Baltische Monatsschrift* 21:3 (1872), 1-40 (p. 14).
[49] Gray, *A History of the Gambia*, p. 51.
[50] Spekke, *History of Latvia*, p. 78; Berkis, *The Reign of Duke James,* p. 147.
[51] Notaries on Otto Stiel's insuations against Hendrik Momber, 8 October 1659, NL-SAA: 5075-48, inv. nr. 1131, fol. 18v. Notary: Joost van de Ven.

Theoretically, the Dukes of Courland could not recruit governors or colonists from outside of Courland or England, after the treaty of 1664. Ducal colonial plans after 1664 show that Courland invested a lot into this agreement and recruiting occurred more frequently in England than on previous voyages.[52] Yet the dukes managed to cut a few corners. Given how important foreign influence had proved in the past for this under-populated dukedom, it is not too surprising to learn this. Schmolls' pilot on the *Fortuna,* Joan Waebes was Dutch.[53] Several of Courland's British governors were Scottish rather than English, a kingdom excluded from the Navigation Acts. The significant size of the Scottish diaspora in the Baltic region was likely too convenient to ignore in Couronian recruitment.

The first Tobagonian voyage after 1658, setting off in 1668 under Moritz Carstens, prioritised establishing defensible presence. The figures of authority were military personnel rather than traders or politicians. Major Hans Jürgen Waltmann was the first of these soldier governors, however, his tenure ended very swiftly. Subsequent expeditions were led by Lieutenant Robert Bennet, a mercenary who has been identified as Scottish.[54] He was joined in 1670 by a Couronian military officer, Major Johann de Lech. It was hoped that they would meet up with Johann Nagel, who himself was a cavalry captain.[55] Despite their primarily military purpose, Jakob instructed the pair to develop some sort of society on Tobago. Jakob's letter of 1 November 1670 ordered them to establish a colony in which they were his 'authorised representatives on the politics, maritime affairs, commerce, plantations and economy in Tobago', responsible for civil justice, religious toleration. and recording all expenses and exchanges.[56]

Bennet and de Lech's joint journey collapsed with the capture of *Möwe* in 1672. Bennet finally established a colony in 1680 when he constructed Fort Bennet at Stone Haven Bay. In naming the fort as such, Bennet started a trend amongst Courland's governors, continued by Fort Monck and Fort Schmoll. Naming forts after governors had not been a custom before Bennet and is a sign of the symbolic strengthening of local authority. The multiplicity of forts is also a sign of how unstable leadership over Tobago became.

Monck arrived on Tobago in 1681, by which point Bennet had fled to Barbados. Franz Monck was another military commander, a *Rittmeister* (cavalry master) like Nagel. Several historians have identified him as being a Scot, but he cultivated close connections with Denmark and Northern Germany.[57] Von Treskow noted that he was working as an officer in Norburg, Schleswig-Holstein.[58]

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[52] Jakovļeva, 'Jauns Avots'; Ships Accounts 1654–1668. LVVA, 554, apr. 1, l. 837.
[53] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 177.
[54] Jakovļeva, 'Jauns Avots', (pp. 57-58).
[55] Copy of the Instructions from Duke Jakob to Johann de Lech and Robert Bennet, given to the Duke's Accountant, Christoph Calau, 1 November 1670, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 2621, fol. 12.
[56] 'Unsere gevollmächtige über die Politique, Maritime, Comertien, Plantagen undt Oeconomi in Tobago'. Ibid.
[57] von Treskow, 'Kapitän Barthold Otto Schmoll', (p. 64).
[58] Ibid.

He also married in that region, wedding Eleonore Christine von Ahlefeldt, a member of a Schleswig-Holstein/ Danish family.[59]

Monck's regional links are symbolic of the type of crew Couronian ships often recruited. However, Monck's colonial management shows us, very dramatically that the role of governor was fully separated from the role of sea captain. Upon arriving in Tobago, Monck executed Andres Hamilton, another Scotsman, and Bennet's captain.[60] The brutal show of discipline is reminiscent of Schmoll's conflict with his own skipper, Peter Lübke, who eventually fled the island, due to his opposition to Schmoll's governance.[61] Such episodes have served to paint an unfavourable picture of Monck and Schmoll in the recollection of Couronian colonialism. Historians have also questioned Monck's expertise, arguing that his new fort at Rockly Bay was difficult to defend.[62] Despite Monck's overhaul of Bennet's legacy, he met with the same problems and eventually left for St Thomas.

Schmoll was also a military man, however, he was not the man intended for governorship. Schmoll sailed for Tobago on 1 January 1686 to complete Monck's work establishing the garrison. He would then have been joined by the new governor, Dietrich von Altenbockum, who left Courland in August 1686. Altenbockum died before he could properly take on his role in the Caribbean but sources differ on where he met his end. His ship, *Wappen von Tobago*, was wrecked in the Faroe Islands injuring the old nobleman in the process Mattiesen claimed he travelled no further than the Faroe Islands on the basis that Friedrich Casimir named Abraham Marin, who came to recover what was salvageable from the destroyed vessel, Altenbockum's replacement in August 1687. Mattiesen assumed that Altenbockum had died in Europe, but a message from Stede to the Lords of Trade and Plantations in London on 19 October 1687, attested that Altenbockum had arrived with Marin on Tobago. Unluckily, Altenbockum's new vessel was also damaged upon arrival and he died of his already substantial injuries.[63] Altenbockum's appointment was an indication of a new direction for governance on Tobago under Duke Friedrich Casimir. Altenbockum was an elderly nobleman and politician, not a military presence. His last position was as a land marshal and he had previously served as the Hauptmann of Doblen.[64]

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[59] 'Frantz Monck (-1705)', *https://finnholbek.dk/getperson.php?personID=I45705&tree=2* [Accessed 18 August 2021].
[60] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 157.
[61] Von Treskow, 'Kapitän Barthold Otto Schmoll', (p. 70).
[62] Edgar Anderson, 'Tobago Heute' in *Baltische Hefte* 7:4 (1961), 212-228 (p. 222).
[63] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 181; Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, p.903; "America and West Indies: October 1687," in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies: Volume 12 1685-1688 and Addenda 1653-1687*, ed. J W Fortescue (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1899), 450-463. British History Online, *http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/colonial/america-west-indies/vol12/pp450-463* [Accessed 15 June 2022]
[64] Von Treskow, 'Kapitän Barthold Otto Schmoll', (p. 72).

The appointment of a political player, who was unlikely to have been well-suited for surviving tropical climes, was indicative of the next stage of colonial development. Whereas the military commanders were sent to do the groundwork, politicians and diplomats were the next wave of Tobagonian elites. Marin's succession of Altenbockum was also part of this new approach.

According to the testament of Waebes and midshipman Erich Palm, Marin found a colony reeling under bad governorship from Schmoll. They painted a picture of a self-centred and violent man, who seemingly had little interest in the wellbeing of his inferiors.[65] At the start of Schmoll's tenure he was said to have sold important food provisions in Jutland. By the end he sold some of his own soldier into slavery. [66] Upon arrival in Tobago, Schmoll ignored ducal instructions to build up either Fort Bennet or Monck and instead established Fort Schmoll in Little Courland Bay. The delayed completion of a fortress left the new colony vulnerable to attacks as well as the rainy season. Schmoll eventually left Tobago, like many of his colonists, arriving in Boston in July 1687. In Schmoll's absence, Marin adopted the governorship for one year before he too sailed to Boston to recover the *Fortuna.* As Marin died in Massachusetts, Friedrich Casimir's plans for a colony run by politicians rather than soldiers never materialised and the last effective governor of Courland's Tobagonian colony was a military officer, Lieutenant Anton Fanton.[67]

Tracking Courland's governors and colonial authority figures provides us with two outcomes. Firstly, the variety of backgrounds of the individuals is very striking. The duke cast the net widely to appoint people across Europe to office in the Atlantic, including Courlanders. These men were also from diverse occupations including soldiers, sea captains, politicians, and diplomats. The dukes attempted to fit the colonial position to the relevant background. For instance, trade commissioners often had financial backgrounds in Amsterdam, focusing on colonial affairs. The governors themselves were chosen depending on how the duke thought the colony should be developing. Jakob separated the role of governor and director when it appeared that he needed to ensure that one man could not ruin his whole colonial venture. When the Tobagonian colony struggled defensively, military commanders took the reins, to provide a robust fortress from which to build a larger colony. Finally, Friedrich Casimir attempted to appoint men with political experience to implement a society, which could interact successfully with neighbouring communities.

The second outcome shows us that Couronian colonialism was a trade-off between the duke and the governors. The duke used personal connections in Northern Europe to appoint governors. He used his own judgement to decide the aims of the colony and who best suited them. However, the governor also wielded significant influence because of the metropole's distance and the need for disaster

[65] Ibid., (pp. 68-70).
[66] Ibid., (p. 69); Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland,* p. 178.
[67] Anderson, 'Die kurländische Kolonie Tobago II', (p. 226).

management. The backgrounds of colonial figures were a factor in the character of colonies, for example if it was militaristic or not. Personal backgrounds also affected the way in which other polities interacted with Courland. For instance, Elmina raised suspicions against any Dutch servant of the duke and the Danish monarchy objected to figures they deemed untrustworthy.

Governors that Never Were

In addition to the governors and directors who assumed control of ducal fortifications, one may also consider the planned structures of governance, that never came to fruition. These indicate still further the disconnect between the aspirations of the dukes and the reality of the situation. In May 1690, Friedrich Casimir attempted to recall Fanton to replace him with a man who boasted a past in colonial leadership. The Holsteiner, Adolph Esmit, was the governor of the Danish West Indies from 1683-1684 and 1687-1688. He was also familiar with Courland, having resided there before and after his tenure in St Thomas.[68]

Despite these credentials, Esmit was not the ideal candidate who could stabilise the colony following Monck and Schmoll. In the words of Anderson, he was 'a real swindler'.[69] Upon learning that his brother, Nicolai, had been appointed the governor of the Danish West Indies in 1679, Adolph travelled from Courland to the Caribbean to depose him, a task in which he had succeeded by 1682. Meanwhile his wife, Charity Esmit, lobbied in Copenhagen to have him officially instated as his brother's replacement.[70] According to Gosse's '*Pirates' Who's Who*', Esmit previously sailed as a buccaneer. He continued his association with pirates as governor; under his management, St Thomas become a pirate haven. Esmit was slow to respond to English complaints that pirates had plundered two of their ships within St Thomas' harbour and was even involved in selling on the violated ships himself.[71] Due to such incidents, Esmit lost his position and eventually found himself on the run. The flight from Denmark led Esmit back to Courland. It seems that Friedrich Casimir, as well as choosing someone with proven Caribbean experience, was plumping for the cheaper option. Esmit's return voyage to the Americas never departed and one wonders if Friedrich Casimir had reconsidered his choice.

The prospective joint plans in association with Poyntz, Brandenburg, and the Rotterdam merchants, gave no indication as to the background most desired in a governor. One presumes that Poyntz's colony would have had an English or Couronian governor given that his involvement was a response to the treaty of 1664. The governor, as with all previous men of that position, would have been

[68] Ibid., (p. 226); von Treskow, 'Kapitän Barthold Otto Schmoll', (pp. 76-77).
[69] 'einen echten Schwindler'. Anderson, 'Die kurländische Kolonie Tobago II', (p. 227).
[70] Carl Frederik Bricka, *Dansk Biografisk Lexikon: Tillige Omfattende Norge for Tidsrummet 1537-1814* (Kjøbenhavn: Gyldendal, 1890), p. 599.
[71] Ibid.; Philip Gosse, *The Pirates' Who's Who Giving Particulars of The Lives and Deaths of The Pirates and Buccaneers* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1924), p. 122.

appointed by the duke. The same applied to judges. In the case of the deputy governor and the assembly advising the governor, candidates would have been chosen by the colonists, but the ultimate decision lay with the duke. The appointment of the fiscal officer, however, was the responsibility of the settlers.[72]

By the 1690s, the duke was the junior partner, required mostly for his legal claims upon Tobago. Consequently, Friedrich Casimir and Ferdinand ceded further control over which personnel were to command colonial life. Brandenburg's plans, proposed in 1686, but accepted by Courland in 1691, split Tobago in half with Brandenburg adopting the flatter, more hospitable land in the west. For this privilege they would pay 40,000 reichsthalers, loaning another 25,000 so the Couronians could construct a new fort.[73] In turn, Courland would provide materials and ships. As Brandenburg were to bring most of the financial backing to the table, Brandenburg wielded the most administrative power. The supreme governor over the whole of Tobago was to be a Brandenburger, who would then be advised by four deputies, two from each partner. The configuration of this Germanic collaboration shows Courland's stock in the Caribbean to have ebbed to a point of very little prestige.

The proposals which the Rotterdam merchants rejected in 1699, made Ferdinand little more than a figurehead. Under the Couronian pitch, the burghers of Rotterdam would select the director of the colony out of several candidates who had contributed 500 guilders to the project. The duke was able to have his pick of the candidates, but only between two hopefuls, both chosen by the Rotterdam burghers. The six members of the governor's supreme councils were voted in by the inhabitants of Tobago's seven districts.[74] The suggestions constituted large concessions to the concept of company organisation. For the first time, directors were to be chosen based on how much capital they had contributed and choosing administrators for the colony was largely in the hands of corporate traders, not the sole responsibility of the Couronian potentate.

Courland's Colonists

Unfortunately, far less information survives concerning the colonists, compared to the governors. Unlike the detailed lists of crewmembers, evidence of named colonists is rare. The oath taken by Jan I. Mulke, et al., is the most complete list of colonists that historians possess.[75] In other instances, colonists were only mentioned by name in particularly noteworthy circumstances. For example, Mollens' report to the duke on 11 August 1654, names those who died in Amerindian attacks: Willem

[72] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 174.
[73] Schück and Kayser, *Brandenburg-Preussens Kolonial-Politik,* (p. 378).
[74] Van Heerwaarden, 'Tobago, Koerland en Rotterdam', (p. 209); Menkman, 'Stukken Betrekkelijk het Eiland Tabago', (pp. 83-84).
[75] Contract signed by soldiers serving the Duke of Courland on Tobago, 10 May 1655, NL-HaNA: 1.10.29, Collectie Fagel, inv. nr .445 fols. 1-1v.

Brandt and Corneles Hanssen. Mollens later revealed that Jan Ennsever Keuper was killed on 22 August.[76]

The other noteworthy example of named colonists accompanies the accounts of the 11 November 1659 Tobago mutiny. A particularly detailed description of this event was available as a result of an inquest, held on 24 June 1661. The investigators took the evidence of several witnesses, including Lieutenant Christopher Holzbruch and more junior soldiers, Kordt Sweichert, Pierre Sanderson, Diedrich Bode, and Olle Larsen. In the absence of Mollens and Brederode, Holzbruch commanded the garrison until Sanderson and two Danes, named Christoffel Kysselingh and Christian Thiessen, rebelled and held Holzbruch hostage. It was at this point that several figures became involved. Sweichert 'confessed that Laurent, Andre and a Scotsman, threatened to kill the Lieutenant if he did not join the rebels. He refused and they were proceeding to hang him when the sergeant, a man named Pierre Sanderson, and the surgeon intervened and ended the squabble.'[77] Other sources implicated Sweichert and one sergeant, named Christian Fihnen, in wanting Holzbruch dead.[78] The dispute did not just concern soldiers. Sweichert reported violence from a farmer, whilst another planter intervened to stop Holzbruch's shooting, because he wanted the lieutenant to hang instead. Eventually, the incident ended without any deaths and the Dutch commander de Beveren, sent much of the garrison to Europe with the promise of payment.[79]

The chaos of the mutiny reveals a couple of characteristics about the Couronian colony. Firstly, the contentment of the garrison was crucial to the existence of Courland's colonies. The soldiers of the fortress possessed the means to instigate change on a level akin to an invasion. Secondly, the activities of the garrison were not completely separated from those of the planters. At least two farmers participated in the mutiny. Soldiers themselves could also be planters; a common soldier received 60 morgens of land, whilst a sergeant could plant as much as 180 morgens.[80] It is also clear that there was some ethnic diversity amongst the soldiers. Scots, Danes, and Courlanders were all mentioned in the testimonies.[81]

As with sailors, ducal captains recruited soldiers at many points on their journey through Northern Europe. Certain ports became quite key. Schulte and du Moulin were encouraged to use their Danish connections to recruit in Copenhagen. Meanwhile, following the directive of the 1664 treaty, ships such as *Rose* and *Islandfahrer* attempted to take on people and resources in Newcastle.[82] As a result,

[76] Anderson, 'Die Kurländische Kolonie Tobago', (p. 136).
[77] Historical Society of Trinidad and Tobago. 'A Pamphlet', p. 5.
[78] Anderson, 'Die Kurländische Kolonie Tobago', (p. 149); Anon, *Korte Deductie*, pp. 19-21.
[79] Anon, *Korte Deductie*, pp. 20-21.
[80] One morgen was equivalent to approximately 1.2 acres, Jekabson-Lemanis, 'Balts in the Caribbean', (p. 39).
[81] Historical Society of Trinidad and Tobago. 'A Pamphlet', p. 5; Anon, *Korte Deductie*, pp. 19-21.
[82] Jakovļeva, 'Jauns Avots'; von Klopmann, 'Abrégé', (p. 214).

Couronian soldiers hailed from various backgrounds, including German, Danish, Swedish, Dutch, and potentially some Latvians. A similar remark can be made of the colonists themselves. In the '*Korte Deductie'* of 1668, the writer impresses that the colonists on Tobago were not just Courlanders. According to this pamphlet, Mollens took 'several households from various nations.'[83] The restrictions of the 1664 treaty, despite directing Couronian ships more frequently to Newcastle, did little to halt such diversity. Anderson noted that Schmoll's 1685 colony contained Danish and Scottish troops, whilst Rotterdam's merchants were responsible for finding 2,000 colonists for their partnership with Ferdinand, most of whom were unlikely to have hailed from England or Courland.[84]

Because of a lack of data, it is impossible to definitively address the prominent historiographical question of the Latvians. The assumption that Latvians travelled to Tobago is based on the provisions made to emancipate colonists who were originally serfs. This practice was reported by the WIC's Matthias Beck, who visited Mollens' colony. Beck remarked that a former serf would be granted thirty morgens of land and the opportunity to buy slaves.[85] If such serfs were being recruited from Courland, then they would have been Latvian (or Liv or Curonian, two further native ethnic groups in the region). They also would not have been recruited into indentured labour like early English and Spanish colonists in the Americas, but allowed to plant as they wished, with the prospect of earning goods through trade.

Despite the evidence that serfs had become colonists, it is still my conclusion that not many Latvians were present. Firstly, Courland and Livonia were some of the most sparsely populated areas of Europe. As stated in the first chapter, Livonia had a population density of six people per square kilometre during the sixteenth century. The United Provinces, frequently identified as a colonial empire with few colonists to spare, had forty people per square kilometre.[86] The United Provinces frequently recruited colonists from overseas. According to Gøbel, 40 to 60% of VOC sailors were not Dutch.[87] Around 100 of the Dutch army in Brazil were Scots and the Dutch plantations at Suriname was so densely populated by Germans that the Pomeranian slaver Joachim Nettelbeck proclaimed it 'a German colony rather than a Dutch one'.[88] If the Dutch colonies struggled for manpower, albeit covering a far larger portion of the globe than the Couronians, then it is understandable that the dukes were forced to recruit outside their territory. The dearth of population in the Eastern Baltic was a key factor in the continuation of serfdom in the area. Latvian farmers who left their plot of land to live in

[83] 'aldaer Huysgesinnen van diverse Nationen'. Anon, *Korte Deductie*, p. 3.
[84] Anderson, 'Die kurländische Kolonie Tobago II', (p. 225); van Heerwaarden, 'Tobago, Koerland en Rotterdam', (p. 208).
[85] Anderson, 'Die Kurländische Kolonie Tobago', (p. 133).
[86] Oberländer, 'Das Konzept der Frühen Neuzeit', (p. 15).
[87] Goebel, 'Danes in the Service of the Dutch', (p. 79).
[88] Esther Mijers, 'Between Empires and Cultures: Scots in New Netherland and New York' in *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 33:2 (2013), 165-195, (p. 176); Von Mallinckrodt et al., 'Beyond Exceptionalism', p. 9.

the towns or in Swedish Livonia were considered escapees. Thus, it is unlikely that Jakob had a large pool of available Latvian peasants from which to choose. The prospect of planting in Tobago offered the former serf thirty acres or twelve hectares. In Livonia there was, on average, sixteen hectares per person, land from which the Couronian noble was loath to alienate the Latvian farmer. It may be possible that serfs, present in much of Eastern Europe, were also recruited from Northern Germany or the hinterlands of Danzig, where the population density was much higher.[89] One must also point out that recruiting colonists further along in the journey, saved food provisions for the long voyage.

In addition to the problem of strict serfdom, Latvian farmers were often not trusted with arms or military service. Einhorn, who wrote the first studies on the Latvians in the seventeenth century, remarked that noble lords did not trust the Latvian population enough with weaponry, as they feared rebellion. Couronian armies rarely included Latvians, as armed combat was considered the preserve of the German colonists. Consequently, if Latvians were drafted into the colonial garrison, they were unlikely to have undergone much training, or considered soldiering their primary occupation.[90]

Most of the population of St Andreas were likely to have been soldiers. The River Gambia outposts were not colonies as the Courlanders did not establish settlements. By contrast, the Tobagonian colony of the 1650s, was only one third soldiers.[91] In the 1680s this proportion grew larger due to the prioritisation of establishing the fortress. Nevertheless, members of the garrison also had secondary roles as craftsmen and other specialists, such as bakers, smiths, and tailors.[92] The skills of other inhabitants of the fortress bely their backgrounds. After receiving Ruprecht's tidings of African gold, Jakob instructed du Moulin to hire workers from the iron mine in Flekkerøy to exploit this opportunity.[93] The presence of Maghellas and a Catholic priest called Godofrede, indicates the Portuguese and Luso-African influence on the outpost. Local Portuguese workmen were involved in building Fort Jacobus itself.[94]

The diversity of nationalities was not a characteristic unique to Courland. What is not so usual is the extent to which the Courlanders officially supported religious toleration to bolster numbers in their colonies. The inclusion of a Catholic priest on St Andreas to cater for Portuguese personnel was not

[89] Oberländer, 'Das Konzept der Frühen Neuzeit', (p. 15).
[90] Paul Einhorn, *Historia Lettica Das ist Beschreibung der Lettischen Nation. In welcher von der Letten als Alten Einwohner und Besitzer des Lieflandes, Curlandes und Semgallen Namen, Uhrsprung oder Ankunfft, ihrem Gottes-Dienst, ihrer Republica oder Regimente so sie in der Heydenschafft Gehabt, auch ihren Sitten, Geberden, Gewonheiten, Natur und Eigenschafften [et]c. Gründlich und Ümbständig Meldung Geschicht. Der Teutschen Nation und allen der Historischen Warheit Liebhabern, zu einem Nöthigen Unterricht zusammen Getragen und in dem Druck Verfertiget Durch Paulum Einhorn, Fürstlichen Curländischen Superintendenten P. M. In Verlegung Jacobi Sternbachs, Notarij Ecclesiastici Curlandis* (Dorpat: Johann Vogeln, 1649), p. 62; Jakovļeva, 'Organizacja Sił Wojskowych', (p. 112).
[91] Jekabson-Lemanis, 'Balts in the Caribbean', (p. 35).
[92] Berkis, *The Reign of Duke James,* p. 72.
[93] Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*, p. 177.
[94] Uber, 'Die Religionspolitik Herzog Jakobs', (pp. 185-186).

the only concession made to non-Lutherans on ducal lands. Jakob instructed Bennet and de Lech 'those who are so devoted to the Lutheran, Catholic and Reformed religion, should be allowed to practice their worship freely and openly', whilst slaves taught in the Catholic faith would also not be persuaded to renounce their beliefs.[95] If negotiations with Pope Innocent X and the papal representatives in Vilnius over colonial funding had continued instead of halting upon the Pope's death, the Catholic presence in Couronian colonialism would surely have been more apparent.[96] Unlike other Protestant colonial powers, Catholicism and religious toleration was a part of metropole life, as the influence of Poland-Lithuania compelled Jakob to accept Catholicism in his lands. The duchy's background in Polish-Lithuanian religious policy may have been helpful in a colonial context, where the duke needed to attract all the colonists and trade, he could find to establish a successful free port in Tobago and a workable factory in Africa.

A welcoming attitude to Catholics was abandoned as soon as the duke was forced to find associates. Charles II would not abide by a Couronian colony which welcomed Catholics and their inclusion was completely restricted in the 1664 treaty. Poyntz's pamphlets therefore occluded Catholics from joining him in Tobago, despite declaring 'liberty of conscience' for all other Christian faiths.[97] The proposals drawn together for the Rotterdam merchants granted religious toleration only for Lutherans and Reformed Christians.[98] These policies show a commitment to keep Couronian colonies as free as possible, whilst also accommodating the religious prejudices of the duke's partners.

Notional religious toleration was used in other colonies, particularly those which wanted to act without trading constraints. For instance, Dutch Caribbean colonies tolerated other denominations of Protestantism as well as Sephardic Jews. Barbados also officially endorsed religious toleration when it was first established as an English colony, but in practice the island leaned culturally towards Anglicanism and did not accept large deviations such as Catholicism.[99] A Catholic prominence, particularly of Irish Catholics, in areas of the English Caribbean and the royal colony of Tangiers was also significant but distrusted by critics in the metropole who worked to lessen such an influence.[100] Elsewhere, religion was often too important to permit fraternisation with other faiths, even if it was economically beneficial. The Spanish monarchy rejected any Couronian involvement in their slave

[95] 'Die so Lutherischer, Catholischer und Reformiter Religion zugethan, soll zu gelaßen sein, ihren Gottes dienste frey und offentlich zu treiben.' Copy of the Instructions from Duke Jakob to Johann de Lech and Robert Bennet, given to the Duke's Accountant, Christoph Calau, 1 November 1670, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l.2621, fol. 13v.
[96] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, pp. 371-376; Andersons, *Senie Kurzemnieki Amerikā*, pp. 106-108.
[97] Poyntz, *The Present Prospect* (1683), p. 44.
[98] Menkman, 'Stukken Betrekkelijk het Eiland Tabago', (p. 84).
[99] Boomert, 'Amerindian-European Encounters', (p. 128); Hilary Beckles, *A History of Barbados: From Amerindian Settlement to Nation-State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 26.
[100] Gabriel Glickman, 'Catholic Interests and the Politics of English Overseas Expansion 1660–1689' in *Journal of British Studies* 55: 4 (2016), 680-708; Akenson, *If the Irish Ran the World*.

trade to limit the Protestant influence within Spanish America.[101] Dutch and English outward expansion was framed around anti-Catholic sentiments which sought to undermine the Spanish colonial economy. Historian Wim Klooster has thus described religion as forming 'the framework of relations' between and within colonies. Although, colonial powers competed and fought against each other on a non-religious basis, religion was one way of affirming cultural and social unity within a colony. Even in relatively open colonies such as New Sweden, religion, as well as loyalty to the potentate, formed a significant part of the colony's character.[102]

As the dukes emphasised diversity and toleration to accrue a greater number of colonists, one may ask to what extent this worked. How many colonists did ducal lands accommodate? The personnel of the ducal outpost in Africa were overwhelmingly soldiers, except for trade commissioners and men of religious instruction. On a map of St Andreas dating from around 1655, residences included the house of the captain and the priest but otherwise contained military barracks.[103] No other living space is indicated on the map, although it is possible that further accommodation was provided in Juffure. Berķis mentions that the duke wished to send married couples to Africa in 1655, perhaps to prevent too many sexual relations between Africans and Europeans. The only mention of women on the island comes from secondary sources which claim that two of the seven people who helped Stiel defend St Andreas against the English were female.[104] The validity of these statements are unclear.

The diminutive size of the fortress and the land attributed to Jakob meant that soldiers were often required to fill practical roles in crafts, food preparation, and repair. The garrison would have numbered between 140 and 160 men, not accounting for deaths. Deniger recruited 100 men from the United Provinces which, according to Eckert, du Moulin's expedition planned to either supplement or replace with 140 men from Copenhagen.[105] It is likely that Stiel's garrison shrank significantly between the Amsterdam chamber's first usurpation of the island and Stiel's first return with personnel from Groningen, as the expedition was organised at short notice.

A more detailed record survives for the colonial population in Tobago. This is courtesy of Courland's diplomatic appeals abroad, in the pamphlets mentioned at the start of this chapter.[106] The initial journey by Mollens is described as consisting of 124 soldiers, 5 officials, and 80 'families'. Thereafter, the colonists were not categorised by their role as soldier or planter. Instead, all the people on board were described as 'families'. Brederode and Albertsen took 130 families in 1656, Bohm 120 and de Brieux 120 on top of this. In 1658 Albertsen arrived with 150 families and in the same year,

[101] Uber, 'Die Religionspolitik Herzog Jakobs', (p. 184).
[102] Fur, *Colonialism in the Margins*.
[103] Map of Couronian Fortress on St Andreas Island, c. 1655, LVVA: 7363, apr. 3, l. 111, fols. 548v.-549.
[104] Gray, *A History of the Gambia*, p. 60; Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 83.
[105] Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*, pp. 169-170.
[106] As well as chapter three.

Jelle Helles brought over 100 families.[107] The '*Breive Deduction*' of 1668 as translated by the Historical Society of Trinidad and Tobago shows us that these figures refer to 'families'. This is not the case in the original French or Dutch versions. Instead, it described the colonists as either 'men', 'soldiers' or 'people'.[108] It is unclear whether the term 'men' is used to denote soldiers or groups of colonists precluding women. It may be assumed that the first shipment of '80 families' did include women as in point seven of the '*Korte Deductie*' the author writes, 'In the year 1656 on the 12 September his High Pricely Serenity dispatched yet another ship to there [Tobago] named the Constantia […] which had 130 soldiers to populate on the island, and to expand the families.'[109] This passage indicates that more men were needed to complete family units, and that soldiers were involved in planting.

If we accept the supposition that one third of settlers to Tobago were soldiers, then we may calculate that 80 families consisted of around 372 people, constituting approximately four and a half members for each family.[110] Accepting the further numbers as estimates of individual people rather than families, takes the overall number of people in the pre-1659 colony to about 1,120 people, quite close to Anderson's estimate but nowhere near von Richter's figure of 12,000 migrants including slaves.[111] It is likely that many of these 1,120 people would have died due to the tropical conditions, diseases and indigenous hostility.

Any estimate of population for the Couronian colony must be well below the population of the Dutch colony which grew to overwhelm the size of the duke's settlements. As Goslinga wrote, by the time of the mutiny, 'the Courland settlement was soon no more than an enclave in Dutch territory.'[112] Consequently, the size of the Couronian colony must be below 1,000-1,500 colonists, plus 7,000 slaves, which was what Goslinga estimated the Lampsisns colony to be at the beginning of the Second Anglo-Dutch War in 1665.[113]

The growth of the Dutch colony beyond the size of the Couronian one shows the underdevelopment of Couronian recruitment networks. In 1654, the Dutch commander Pieter Becquard submitted to Mollens because his garrison was outnumbered. Mollens' initial 124 soldiers was far larger than Becquard's expedition of 50 people in total.[114] Unlike the Courlanders, the Zeeland governors

[107] Historical Society of Trinidad and Tobago. 'A Pamphlet', pp. 1-3.
[108] 'mannen', 'soldaten' and 'persoonen'. Anon, *Korte Deductie*, pp. 6-9.
[109] 'In't Jaer 1656. den 12, September, depscheerde sijn Hoogh Vorstelijcke Doorluchtigheyt noch een ander Schip daer naer toe, ghenaemt Constantia […] de welcke 130 Soldaten by sich hadde om het Eylandt te populeeren, ende de Familien te vergrooten.' Ibid., p. 7.
[110] Jekabson-Lemanis, 'Balts in the Caribbean', (p. 35).
[111] Von Richter, *Geschichte der Russischen Kaiserthum*, p. 77.
[112] Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean*, p. 442.
[113] Ibid., p. 444.
[114] Ibid., p. 440.

expected that they would have ample opportunity to recruit in the Caribbean itself. Becquard, instead of establishing a settlement on Tobago immediately, sailed to St Eustatius to collect more colonists. His colony's population was also bolstered by migration from the Guianas and refugees fleeing Brazil.[115] Consequently, population trends on Tobago were heavily influenced by connections and networks present in the Americas, connections Courland did not possess.

The return of ducal colonists to Tobago was heavily disrupted by high mortality rates within the colonies themselves. The expeditions returned in roughly the same numbers; however, soldiers were prioritised. The initial return under Waltmann included forty Danish soldiers. Further ships contained more familiar numbers. In January 1682, Richard Dutton of Barbados reported that '[t]he Duke has sent a couple of ships and about 100 men to resettle Tobago'.[116] Similarly, Thomas Lynch in Jamaica reported that a ship carrying Englishmen to Tobago for the duke had arrived in Barbados with '135 passengers'.[117]

Although Couronian ships arrived with similar numbers as they had previously, the colonies had more difficulties retaining them, as a result of disease, raids, and the inclination of many colonists to flee. According to the English, Friedrich Casimir sent colonists with little faith that they would thrive there. One source described how the duke feared that the 400 colonists accompanying Schmoll were not sufficient and instructed his envoy in London to ask for more men.[118] In documents kept in Brandenburg it was noted that the colonist population was not enough to exploit the land. Papers urging the cooperation of Courland and Brandenburg remarked, 'Courland requires slaves because of a dearth on the island of Tobago, which up to this date they have had nothing to sufficiently cultivate it'.[119] It recommended that Brandenburg should be responsible for sending sixty slaves a year to the Couronian colony on Tobago.[120]

The Administration of Courland's Colonies: St Andreas Island

By the time Brandenburg and Courland had considered splitting Tobago, Courland's original source of slaves had long gone. The purchase of slaves represented a typical European aim in Africa. However, if we are to determine whether Courland's colonies were similar to those of their contemporaries, we need to piece together the few sources we have on administration.

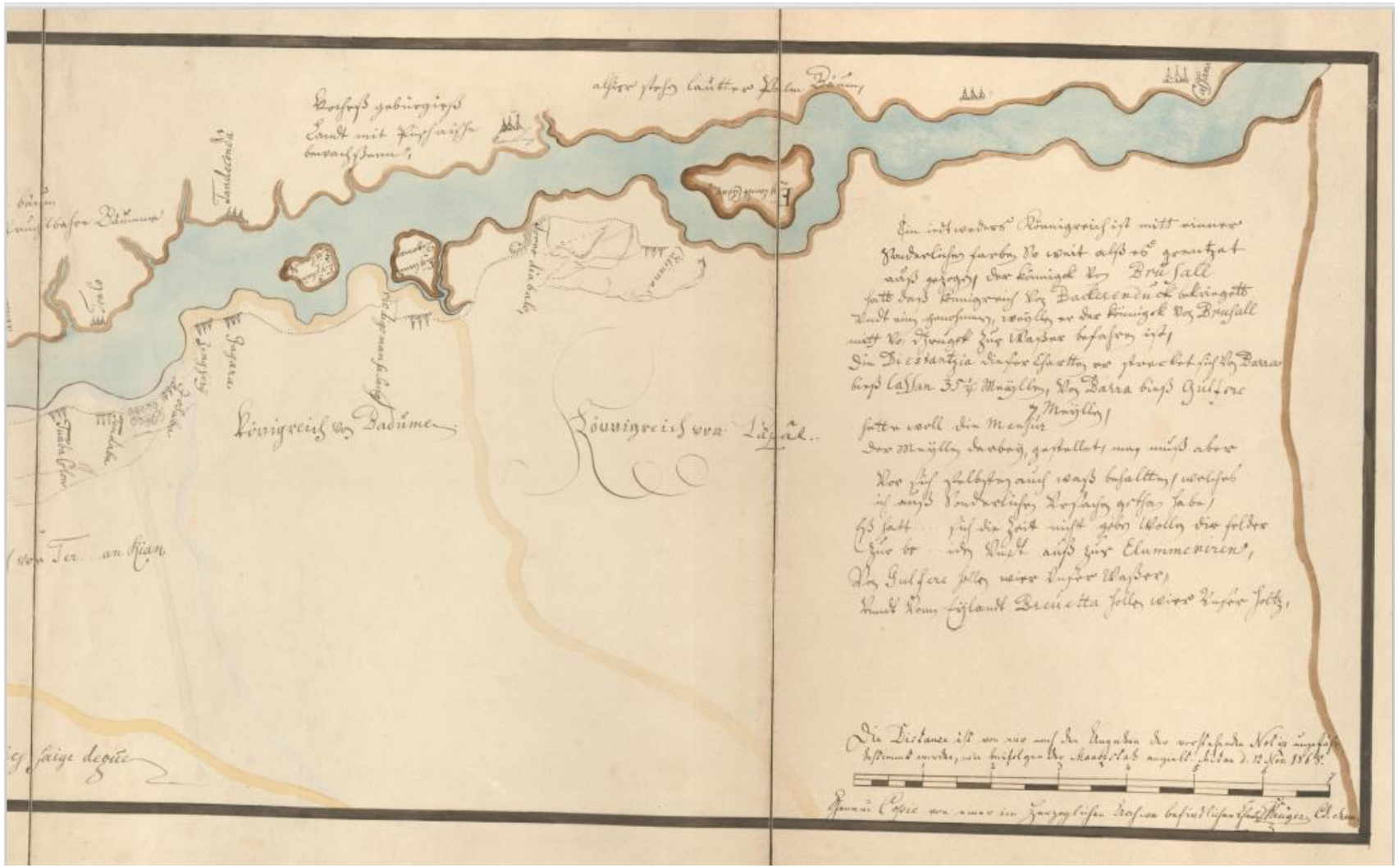
[115] Ibid.; Menkman, 'Tobago', (p. 312).
[116] Jakovļeva, 'Jauns Avots', (p. 58); Archibald, *Tobago*, pp. 33.
[117] Archibald, *Tobago*, pp. 33.
[118] Historical Society of Trinidad and Tobago, 'An Impartial Account', p. 3.
[119] 'Zu Curlandt, die Insul Tabago wegen mangel benötigen Esclaven, biß dato nichts genugsahm cultivien können'. Proposed contract between Brandenburg and Courland about Tobago, undated, GStA PK: I. HA Rep.9 Polen nr.7 e 1, fol. 51v.
[120] Ibid., fol. 54.

Our knowledge of Couronian activity in Africa mostly concerns the central point of St Andreas Island, yet we know Couronian interests spread far beyond this. The Couronians had a presence in Bayona and Juffure, which were likely small factories. These were designed to obtain essential resources for the upkeep of the main headquarters on St Andreas. A map, produced in 1868 from a copy of a seventeenth century ducal chart of the Gambia, emphasises the key role of these factories (see Figures 20 and 21). 'We get our water from Juffure' the map notes remark, 'and from Brefeta Island, our timber.' The Island of Bayona is shown directly beside the town of Brikama, a main centre in the Kingdom of the Kombo, and opposite Barra, the major settlement in Barra/ Niumi. The Couronians traded for essential food items there, as well as holding political negotiations.[121] The Couronians also possessed sixty square miles of territory in Kassan. Kassan is to be found at the very edge of the 1868 chart, as it comments, 35 ¼ miles downstream. It is likely that Jakob wanted this territory due to the possibility of gold being found there. Further maps stretch well beyond where the Gambia becomes unnavigable by ocean-going vessels, and even seem to connect to the hinterland of the Gold Coast. These maps do not appear to have been produced by Courlanders, and one was drawn after 1660, as it refers to Saint Andreas Island as James Island.[122] The Courlanders also had a brief interest in the mouth of the Sierra Leone as a place for collecting slaves. Known slaving efforts seem to have focused on the Gold Coast, the Bight of Benin, and Sierra Leone rather than the River Gambia itself. For instance, Mollens chose to sail near Axim and Elmina to obtain his slaves, rather than the secure base in the Gambia. Such decisions indicate that the fort there may not have been such a focal point for the slave trade as it was for the English after their takeover.[123]

Overleaf Figures 20 and 21: Copy of a Couronian map of Gambia, 1868 DSHI: 190, 152 Karte von Gambia. Kassan is marked in the top, right-hand corner of figure 21.

[121] 'von Gulfere hollen wier Unser Waßer, undt vom Eylandt Breuetta hollen wier Unser Holtz' and Copy of a Couronian map of Gambia, 1868, DSHI: 190, 152 Karte von Gambia.
[122] Ibid; Map of colonial property of the Duke of Courland, undated, LVVA: 554, apr. 2, l. 3179.
[123] Copies of correspondence between Director General Ruijghaver and Willem Mollens, 9-10 March 1652, NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.01 Oude West-Indische Compagnie, inv. nr. 13A, fols. 214-223.


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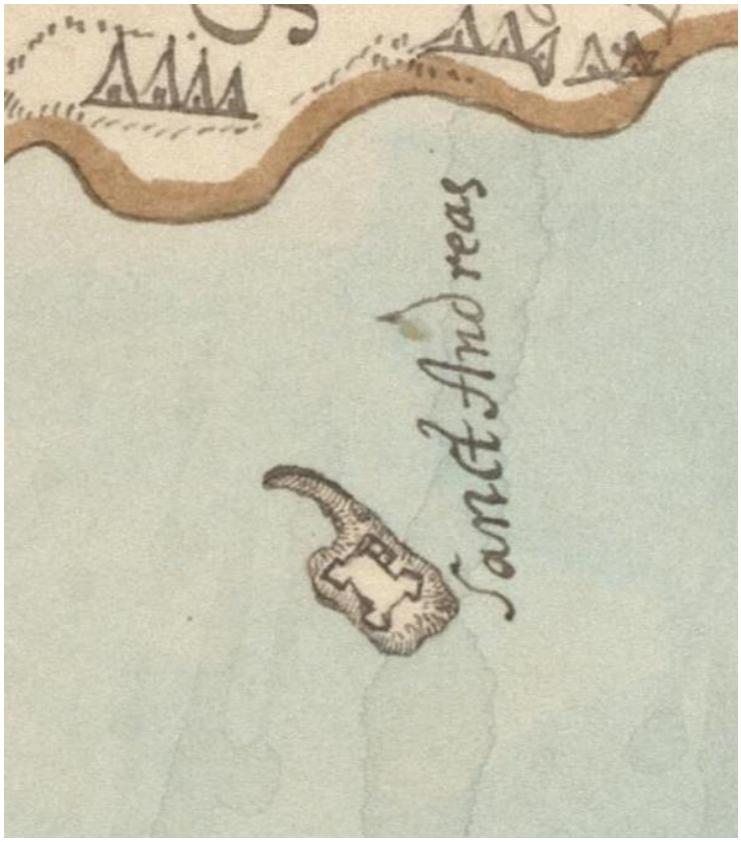


Figure 22: Detail of Fort Jacobus on Saint Andreas Island. Copy of a Couronian map of Gambia, 1868, DSHI: 190, 152 Karte von Gambia.

The fortress itself, according to analysis by Balcerek was very simplistic and almost a copy of plans featured in instructional fort-building books.[124] In all depictions of the fort from Couronian mapping, including the 1868 copy where it is merely a tiny outline, the fort is shown as a four-sided oblong with four triangular, rather spear-headed bastions (see Figure 22).[125] The construction of the fortress was a large undertaking which required the recruitment of local people. Schulte indicates that these people were Africans, provided by the Mansa of Barra, although different sources tell of Portuguese involvement.[126] The fortress, built of clay with a wooden keep, unlike the later English stone construction, was found to be unimpressive from two different perspectives. John Blake of the English Guinea Company ridiculed the structure, recalling the Bible parable in which the fool builds

[124] Balcerek, *Dawne Kurlandzkie Fortyfikacje*, p. 4.
[125] Copy of a Couronian map of Gambia, 1868, DSHI: 190, 152 Karte von Gambia.
[126] Mattiesen, 'Ein Tagebuch', (p. 197); Uber, 'Die Religionspolitik Herzog Jakobs', (p. 185).

his house on the sand. The Mansa of Barra, meanwhile, took issue at the large and imposing nature of the fort and sought reassurances that the installation would not threaten him.[127]

One chart, seemingly from 1655, labels the buildings present on the island (see Figure 23). This depiction belies the predominantly military presence on the island. The fort itself contained officers' quarters and a guardroom. It also housed eight cannons, the most powerful of which faced the mouth of the river to the West. One of these cannons must have been damaged, destroyed or stolen, during the Dutch departure of the island, as Stiel only possessed seven cannons during his confrontation with Holmes. There are further military buildings outside the fort, including the captain's quarters and two barracks.[128]

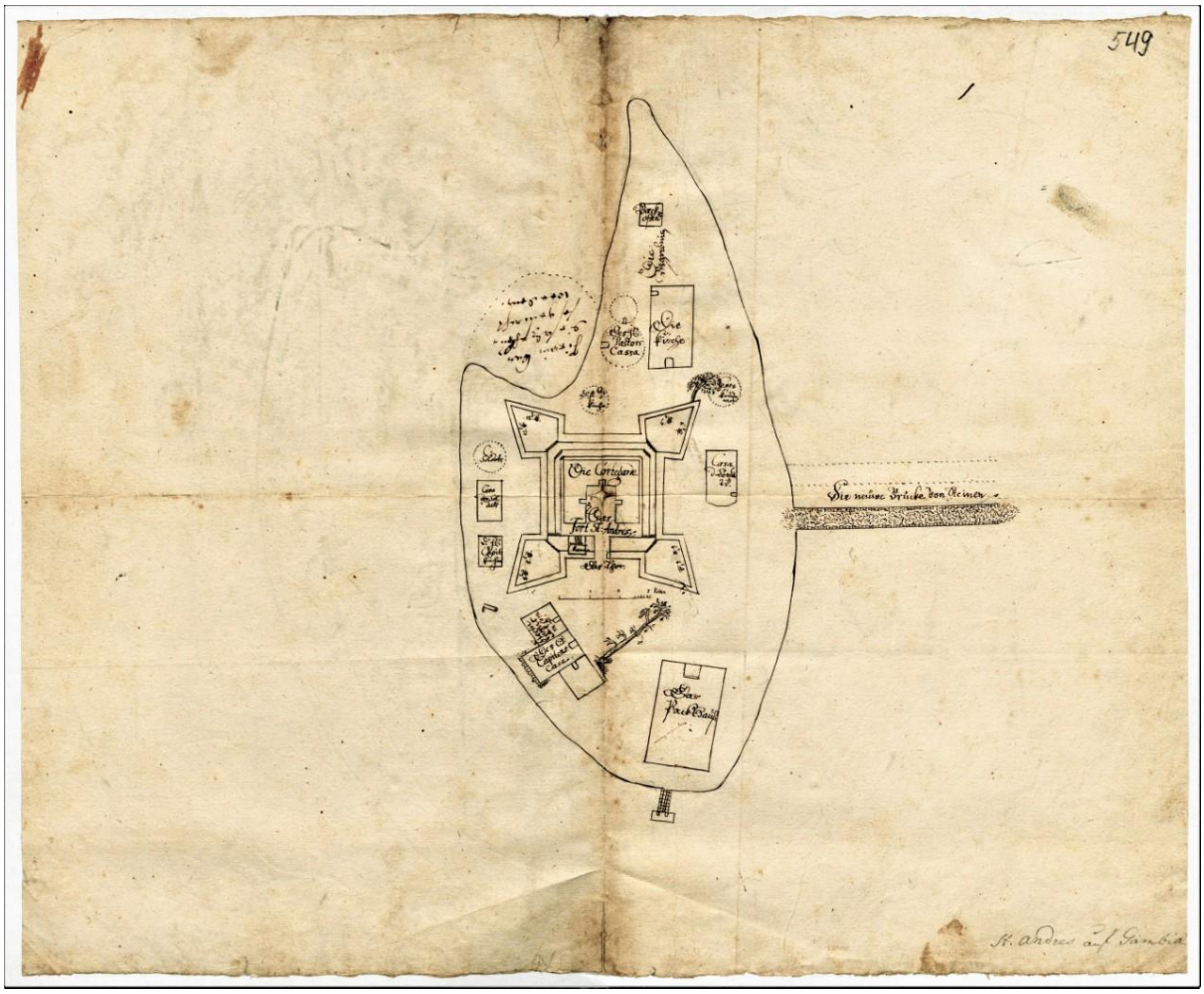


Figure 23: Plan of St Andreas Island, c. 1655, LVVA: 7363, apr. 3, l. 111, fols. 548v.-549.

[127] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, p. 130.
[128] Map of Couronian Fortress on St Andreas Island, c. 1655, LVVA: 7363, apr. 3, l. 111, fols. 548v.-549.

Despite the military nature of the island, the space was necessarily shared by non-military buildings. There was space for the surgeon as well as a merchant's office, from which the team of two to three trade commissioners worked. Two jetties serviced the island, the smaller to the south, and the larger protrusion on the east of the island constructed from stone, presumably to handle very substantial shipments.[129] Such shipments were destined for the warehouse, which stood beside the smaller jetty. The warehouse was the second building to be constructed upon the island in December 1651, showing the imperativeness of purchasing food and goods.[130] Next to the newer, larger jetty is a curiously named building marked '*casa di servati*'. This description of the building may indicate a building for servants, in which case it may have been the living quarters of the local men who constructed the fort. It could also have been a place to house slaves, a conclusion supported by its proximity to the jetty and its distance from the other buildings.[131]

The remaining structures, to the north of the island are an oven, a church, the house of the minister, and the island's cemetery. Both the church and the cemetery feature prominently on other maps, such as the one copied into Diedrichs' and Mattiesen's older works, the original of which is now lost, and an artistic impression of the island, located in the Riga archive (see Figures 24 and 25).[132] The focus on the cemetery is a stark reminder that mortality rates on the island were high and that the graveyard would have grown swiftly after the Courlanders' arrival. The church itself was an important part of Couronian life on the Gambia, not just as a provision of spiritual guidance to the garrison, but as a specific colonial approach. The Lutheran minister who occupied this place of worship took on additional missionary responsibilities and thus the minister was required to learn African languages.[133]

By installing such people, the duke may have wished to avoid a dependence on Portuguese-speaking Luso-Africans and Iberian middlemen. The presence of a Catholic priest at St Andreas indicates that such people were initially to be accommodated.[134] This is a prime example of how religious tolerance was used to attract a wide pool of expertise. Even when using Lutheran missionaries, Jakob did not press the religious aspect, rather the notion of communication, writing, 'with the Blacks as well as with the Christians of different religions see that there is no vexation or bitterness.'[135] The policy indicates the lack of power and resources. The fledgling outpost could not afford to alienate useful

[129] Ibid.
[130] Mattiesen, 'Ein Tagebuch', (p. 198).
[131] Map of Couronian Fortress on St Andreas Island, c. 1655, LVVA: 7363, apr. 3, l. 111, fols. 548v.-549.
[132] Diederichs, *Herzog Jacobs*; Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, p. 448.
[133] Illustration of Couronian Fortress on St Andreas Island, c. 1655, LVVA: 7363, apr. 3, l. 111, fols. 552v.-553; Uber, 'Die Religionspolitik Herzog Jakobs', (p.186).

[134] Uber, 'Die Religionspolitik Herzog Jakobs', (pp. 185-186).
[135] 'aber sowohl bey den schwarzen, als bey den Christen unterschiedlicher Religion kein Ägerniß undt kein Verbitterung'. *Ibid.*, (p. 186).

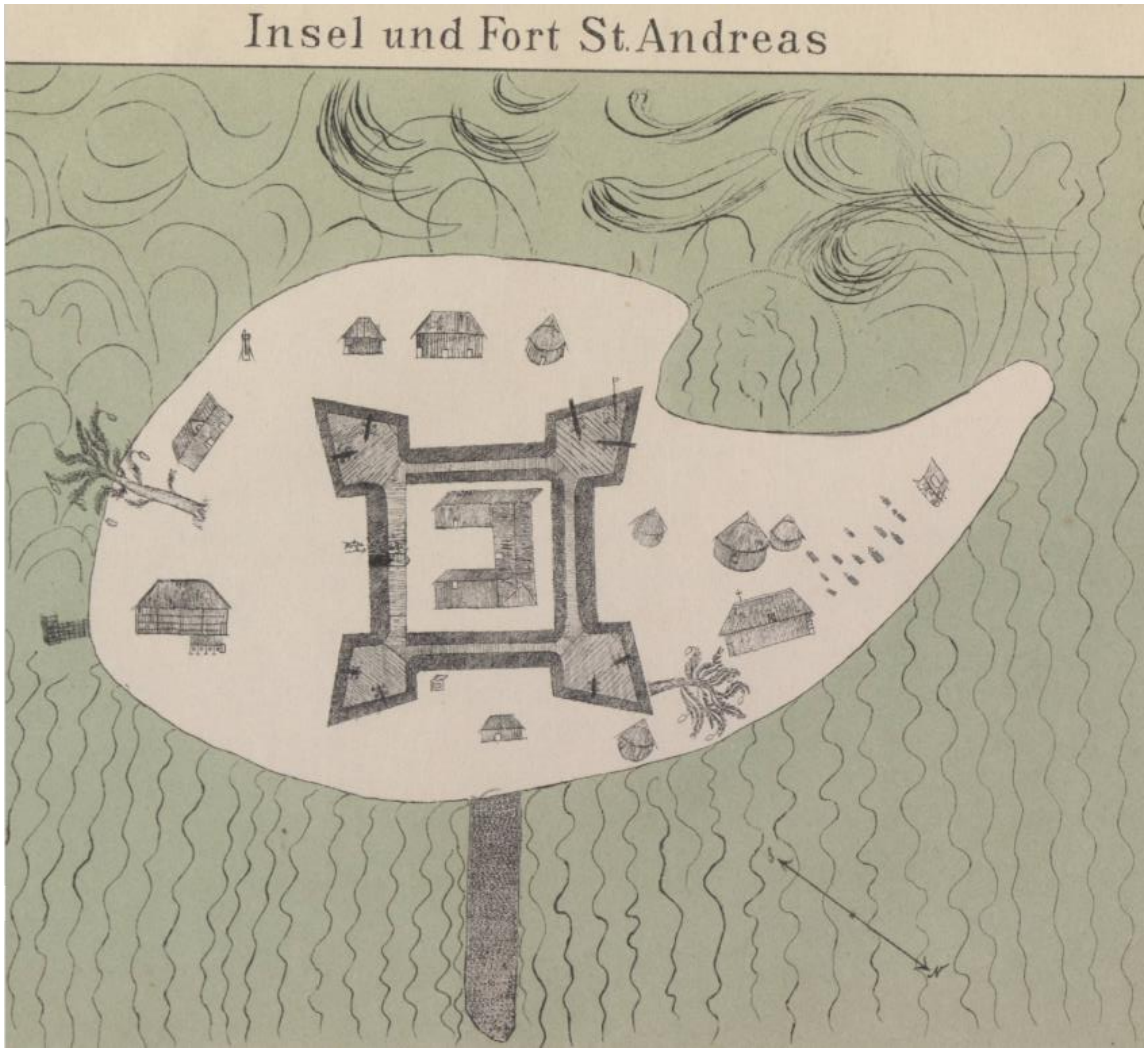


Figure 24: Illustration of St Andreas Island found in Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, p. 448.

middlemen of pagan, Muslim, or Catholic persuasions, so caution was advised of missionaries whose primary role was to ensure cohesion between traders of different cultures.

The attitude of religious caution also relates to a predilection for avoiding conflict and for neutrality. Duke Jakob aimed for such an outlook regarding relations with European powers on the Western African coast. By showing willingness to try to negotiate with the States General in 1651, and with the English king in 1664, the duke declared himself a cooperative and harmless part of the African trading scenery. Despite these intentions, the neutrality of the Couronian colony was thwarted by European rivalry in Western Africa and the reaction of Jakob's 'men on the spot' to this environment of competition. The coast of Africa was a heavily contested part of the world and the jostling for power did not preclude smaller traders, for example the fortress of Carolusborg became a site of violent contestation between Swedish, Dutch, and Danish business interests.[136]

[136] Rella, *Im Anfang war das Fort*, p. 113.

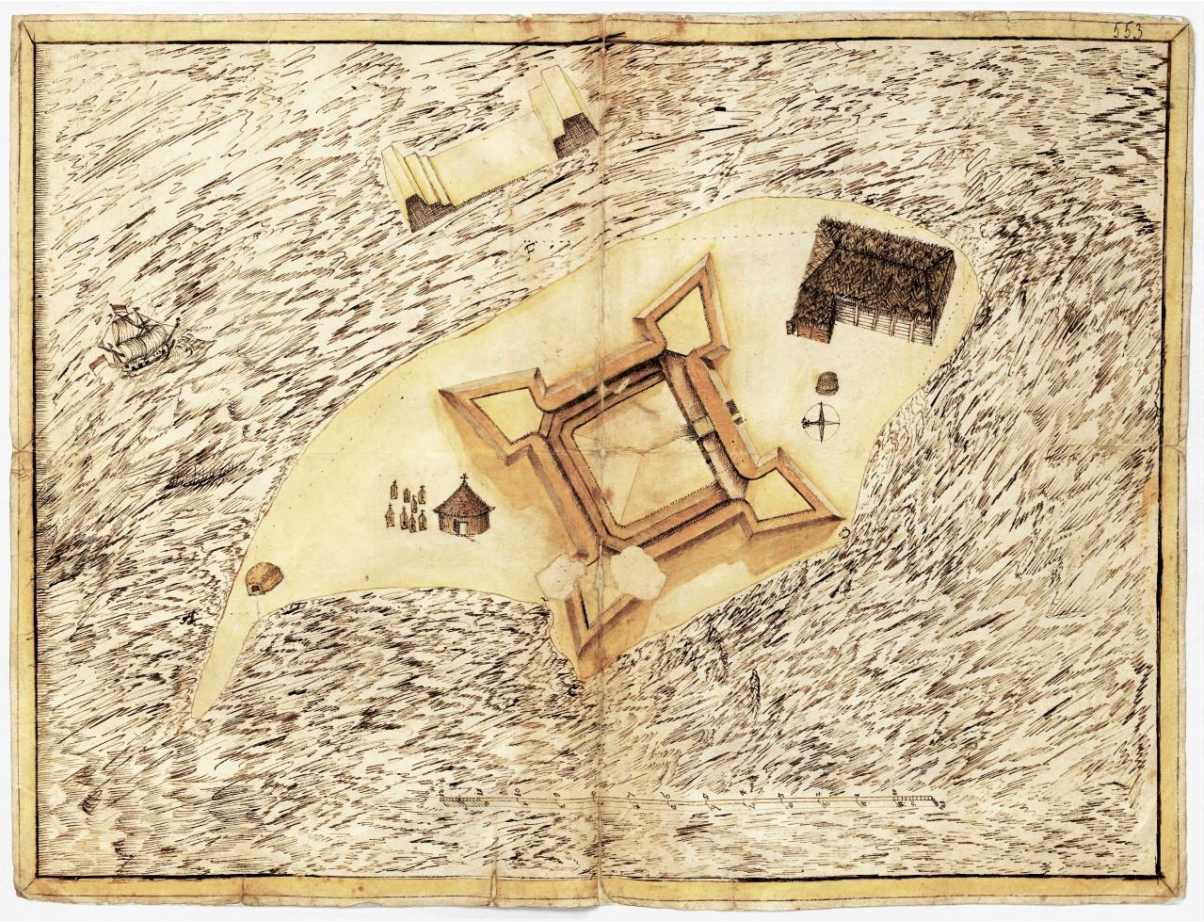


Figure 25: Illustration of Couronian Fortress on St Andreas Island, c. 1655, LVVA: 7363, apr. 3, l. 111, fols. 552v.-553.

Leaders of the Couronian outpost, often reacted to these confrontations by joining in, defying the philosophy set out by their duke. Schulte aided Prince Ruprecht's expedition in capturing boats belonging to the English Commonwealth and Spain, for instance.[137] Stiel not only fired his cannons near Holmes' ships but also sought to influence the Mansa of Barra to attack English and Dutch traders by informing them that the merchants wished to enslave their people. Such tactics possibly influenced Barra's decision to attack the Dutch garrison in Juffure. They are also reminiscent of the actions taken by Dutch trade commissioner, Pedro Justo Baque who persuaded the Mansa of Barra to attack the English on the River Gambia in December 1661 under the pretence that the RAC sought to undermine him.[138] The Courland outpost thus partially engaged in standard colonial competitiveness.

[137] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, p. 134.
[138] Eckert, *Kurland unter dem Einfluss des Merkantilismus*, p. 187; Account of Stephen Ustick on the events of 1661 on the River Gambia, 7 July 1664, TNA: CO 1/18, 69, fols. 156-157.

The Couronian Caribbean

The initial Tobagonian colony, established by Willem Mollens, occupied the northside of Great Courland Bay, near to an indigenous settlement. The original setup included a fortress, Fort Jacobus, and a nearby settlement, Jacobsstadt. The initial fort, according to contemporary Couronian mapping, featured three bastions, including cannons (Figure 26). It overlooked a natural harbour, a main factor in Courland's interest in Tobago, as the island was abundant with them.[139] The settlements near to the fortress included barracks and a church. The Courland River provided a water source and an opportunity to power mills. The colony, given its prominent fortress and constant replenishing of personnel, fits Osterhammel's model of a 'militarily supported' colonial community. However, like the Gambian colony, the soldiers possessed roles which stretched beyond a purely military vocation.[140]

Matthias Beck's report on Mollens' colony is a useful account of how the colonists managed their land. The process was very hierarchical with land apportioned more generously to those of higher rank. For instance, a captain received 300 morgens (81 hectares) of land for planting, whilst his immediate inferior received 240 morgens. The cornet followed with 210, the sergeant with 180 until we find the common soldier or servant, who was granted 60 morgens, and the serf, who, as previously mentioned, received 30 morgens.[141] One assumes that soldiers of rank possessed enough time and human resources through servants or slaves to tend to their land, during their time of service. Planters held the land for three years without payment, after which a rent was then charged.[142] This allowed the colonist to accrue sufficient produce to create a surplus for sale, potentially for slave labour. As soldiers only served for three years, before returning, one may assume that the duke only received rent from colonists, who would have cultivated a smaller plot of land than soldiers. It also created a situation where land would change hands rather frequently.[143] What the settlers cultivated on their plantations was not prescribed to them. Couronian colonists most frequently grew tobacco, although indigo, ginger and sugarcane were also planted. Upon taking over the colony, the Dutch prioritised sugar, enhancing the colony by constructing a new sugar mill there.[144]

After 1660, there were significant difficulties in re-establishing the outposts. This meant that a colonial system could not properly form. Decisions were often informed by the military and utilitarian judgments of the commander of the garrison, for instance, Schmoll's decision to carry out retribution

[139] Anonymous reflection on the economic benefits of colonising the island of Tobago, LVVA: 554, apr. 3, l. 387.
[140] Osterhammel, *Colonialism*, p.11.
[141] Jekabson-Lemanis, 'Balts in the Caribbean', (p. 39).
[142] Historical Society of Trinidad and Tobago. 'A Pamphlet', p. 1.
[143] Jakovļeva, 'Jauns Avots', (p. 58).
[144] Boomert, 'Amerindian-European Encounters', (p. 131); Sumner, *New Courland, Tobago*.

against the Kali'na Amerindians on Tobago after the Kali'nago had attacked the colony.[145] The instability of the colony post-1660 disrupted long-term plans for a plantation export economy as the colonists focused upon subsistence.

Aiding other colonists was thought to be how Courlanders could ensure their survival. Appeals were especially made to Barbados for aid in return for timber. The 1664 agreement with Charles II and his appeals to Barbados to provide assistance for Tobago, were seen as the basis for the duke's presence in the Caribbean, and thus Barbados became a trading priority. When Marin travelled to Barbados in order to gather food, he paid for it in timber and Fanton's community also saw timber for Barbados as the most likely way to sustain itself, rather than engaging in lucrative planting which would have challenged the Barbadians.[146]

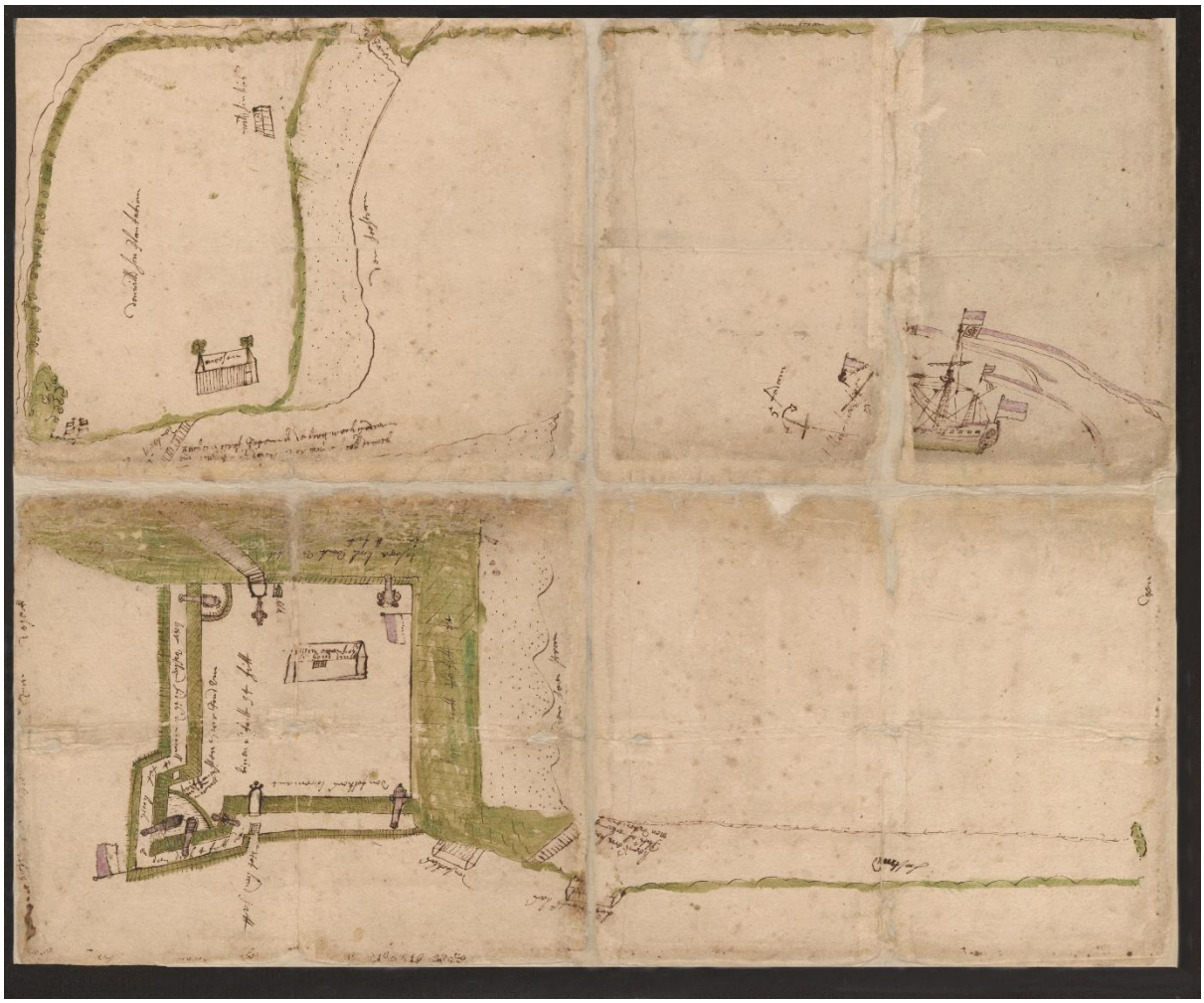


Figure 26: Fort Jacobus on Tobago. LVVA 7363- 3-111, fol.545.

[145] Boomert, 'Amerindian-European Encounters', (p. 142).
[146] Ibid.

Our clearest picture of how the Tobagonian colony could have been managed is through ducal plans. These ideas, although never realised, offer an insight into how unique the Couronian perception of the colonial economy may have been. The fact that the duke and his immediate advisory council were the ones producing such plans is the first sign of Couronian peculiarity, as this involvement shows that Couronian colonialism was the personal project of the potentate, not a colonial company.

Duke Jakob's 1670 instructions to Bennet and de Lech are the closest any of these existing post-1664 ducal directives came to becoming reality, primarily because Bennet and de Lech were able to reach the Caribbean. Jakob instructed that, if Nagel was not found, Bennet and de Lech should rule the colony '*in collegio*', together.[147] The joint governors would also distribute land collectively but the judgments on how to plant it would be the responsibility of the planters themselves, with some limited help from the garrison, should they require it.[148]

The duke took a great interest in exploiting every resource available on the island and urged Bennet and de Lech to 'inquire at every opportunity about Tobago […] the rivers, islands and mountains, how far they extend into the country, how far one is from the other, about fruits, ores, rarities and useful commodities […] all of which is to be compiled in a certain chart with a thorough description.'[149] The governors were told to pay particular attention to finding minerals and, if they were to be found, not to tell any foreigners, so that Jakob could dispatch miners to exploit the resource himself. Jakob also recommended that slaves should be sent to the island of Margarita to collect pearls, an industry which had slowed somewhat since the intensive Spanish harvesting of the sixteenth century.[150] Metals and pearls were seen as ducal commodities, only to be sold by the colonial authorities.

Planters were to be encouraged to pursue 'commerce and agriculture,' particularly sugar and tobacco, which was noted to yield 'the highest fortune'.[151] It is striking that Jakob had put a lot of personal thought into what and even how the colonists were to farm. This was typical of a technical, cameralist mind. He recommended that slaves could be used to clear the land for plantations, and he even gave detailed instructions on the proper way to harvest salt from the sea.[152] Such comments again offer testament to how thoroughly involved Jakob was in the theoretical planning for his colonies.

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[147] 'in einen collegio'. Copy of the Instructions from Duke Jakob to Johann de Lech and Robert Bennet, given to the Duke's Accountant, Christoph Calau, 1 November 1670, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 2621, fol. 12.
[148] Ibid., fol. 13.
[149] Sie sollen sich aller gelegenheit auff Tobago wohl erkundigen […] was vor Reviren, Eylanden und gebirgte alda verhanden, wie weit sich dieselben ins Landt erstrecken, wie weit ein orth von den andern gelegen, was vor früchte, Erz, raritäten und nuzbahrkeiten […] solches alles in einer gewißen Carthe und gründlichen beschreibung verfaßen,'. Ibid., fols. 14- 14v.
[150] Ibid., fol. 16.
[151] 'Die Commertie, wie auch die Beförderung des Landtbaues' and 'höchste Vermoegen'. Ibid., fol. 12v.
[152] Ibid., fols. 15-15v.

The duke also provided instructions on who the colonists should be and how they should interact with other colonies. The duke sought to avoid another mutiny, decreeing that soldiers should only remain in Couronian service for three years, with one of those years being the time it took to travel to and from the Caribbean. This measure prevented soldiers become too weary of a remote colonial life. He also commented that men 'as far as is possible' should arrive with women and children 'so that they have reason to concern themselves with agriculture.'[153] As in the Gambian colony, Jakob promoted a policy of religious toleration so that no potential colonist was barred unnecessarily from enhancing the outpost's population.[154]

To some extent, the duke was also free and open regarding the colony's relationship with other colonies, another policy designed to increase trade. Jakob instructed that, once the colony was able to sustain itself with all the food it needed, then foreign ships would be welcomed in peace, as indeed would Amerindian peoples.[155] However, this new colony was still to be wary of fraternising too widely. The guarantee of safety, Jakob stressed, was to come from Barbados. Indeed, it was Barbados to whom Bennet and Marin would turn to when their colonies were most in need. Jakob encouraged his governors to frequent English islands colonies rather than Dutch or Portuguese ports.[156]

The deal Jakob, and subsequently Friedrich Casimir, struck with the Poyntz is an even clearer sign of Couronian reorientation towards English cooperation. Poyntz's pamphlets were aimed directly at potential English (not Scottish) colonists, to take advantage of the duke's land in Tobago.[157] The overwhelming selling point, in Poyntz's mind, was the tremendous abundance of agricultural produce present on the island. In his pamphlets, Poyntz waxed lyrical about the sheer variety of flora and fauna present on Tobago, and always ensured that his extensive lists of resources were linked back to the ways in which they could be harvested, used, or eaten. The vision of plenty also pertained to commercial products. 'I almost blush to express […] that the produce of one acre of canes should amount to six thousand pounds of sugar, besides rum and molasses which in Barbados and the leeward islands they esteem it great profit if at any time one acre yields them three thousand [pounds].'[158] Poyntz also indicated that tobacco was easy to plant and could make 200 pounds in the first year. On top of that a planter could sell ginger, beeswax, cacao, and timber for Barbados at a tidy profit.[159] The range of options presented by Poyntz indicates that colonists still had the freedom to

[153] 'so viel müglich' and 'damit sie uhrsach haben mögen, sich des Landtbaues zu befleißigen.' Ibid., fol. 13.
[154] Ibid., fol. 14v.
[155] Ibid., fol. 17.
[156] Ibid., fol. 14v. and 17.
[157] Poyntz, *The Present Prospect* (1683); Poyntz, *The Present Prospect* (1695).
[158] Poyntz, *The Present Prospect* (1683), p. 32.
[159] Ibid.

choose which commodities the Couronian colony sold. The only commodities off limits were metals, minerals, and pearls over which the duke retained exclusive rights.[160]

Poyntz presented an enticing and very likely fanciful trajectory of how a planter could succeed in Tobago. Each colonist would pay 50 pounds for transport, receiving a very generous lease of 50 acres for 1,000 years. The offer contrasted with the hierarchical system of disseminating land, described by Beck in 1654. Poyntz intended to bring 1,200 colonists to the island in three years, thus filling half of Jakob's grant to him in that period.[161] Friedrich Casimir seems to have regarded such promises as unrealistic; Tobago does not have 120,000 acres to spare and is only just over 74,000 acres in area. Poyntz's new deal with Friedrich Casimir, pledged to bring 1,200 colonists to Tobago over 5 or 6 years and to bestow them with only 30 acres for 1,000 years.[162]

Poyntz promised the colonist a lot from this new land. Plots would be rent free for seven years (rather than three years) after which point, they cost two pence per acre. However, Poyntz claimed that one could already be making 5,000 pounds per year by that point. This assumed that in the first year a private plantation would cost forty-seven pounds and ten shillings to maintain. A healthy yield could then be sold at enough profit to accumulate more land and slaves to tend to it. These improvements, Poyntz claimed, could double, or triple the profit, not least because a slave on Tobago, according to Poyntz, would cost a planter only 15 pounds per head; a slave in the Spanish Americas would cost 100 pounds.[163]

Poyntz was ultimately thwarted in his plans by the reluctance of the English crown to support him. Lack of royal recognition also foiled Brandenburg's plans to associate with Friedrich Casimir. The main premise of the association, as stated early in a draft resolution of 1691, was that Brandenburg needed a foothold in the Caribbean and Courland lacked the slaves to sustain the one they already possessed. The solution to both problems lay in what both powers did hold; Courland the supposed legal ownership of a Caribbean island, as confirmed by the 1664 treaty, and Brandenburg an African fortress in the form of Groß-Friedrichsburg, established in 1683. However, Courland's usefulness to Brandenburg could only be realised through England's continued recognition of the 1664 agreement, something that had not been guaranteed since the Peace of Breda in 1667.

The success of Brandenburg's resolution also depended on the British monarchy upholding the Gambian end of the bargain. Point four of the draft expected not only Courland to be allowed to trade slaves on the Gambia, but also for Brandenburg to be permitted to 'practice free trade at the English

[160] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 174.
[161] Ibid., p. 156.
[162] Ibid., p. 174; Poyntz, *The Present Prospect* (1695).
[163] Poyntz, *The Present Prospect* (1683), pp. 40-41.

and formerly Couronian fortress'.[164] The presence of a ready supply of slaves was considered vital and thus accepted from all avenues, but only to a certain extent. Point nine explained that foreign ships were able to trade slaves on Tobago but only up to the cost of sixty or seventy reichsthaler to prevent 'excessive deliveries from foreign nations.' The trade of all other goods from foreign ships was to be 'totally free.'[165]

Brandenburg's commitment to a semi-free trade colony, suited previous Couronian endeavours which had sought to attract trade and colonists from diverse backgrounds. Brandenburg even accepted that colonists of all Christian faiths, save for Jesuits, could find a home on the joint colony.[166] The free nature was also reminiscent of Brandenburg's previous colony on St Thomas, which it had rented from the Danish West India Company. St Thomas was notoriously free to the majority of traders.[167] This new association followed on from the beginning of Brandenburg's lease on St Thomas in 1685. The initial posing of the deal for joint settlement of Tobago came in 1686. Interestingly the contract allowing Brandenburgers a share of St Thomas also set the maximum price for a slave at sixty reichsthalers.[168]

In contrast to life on St Thomas, where Brandenburg adopted a junior position, the Electorate assumed marginally more control than Courland. The supreme governor was to be Brandenburg's candidate and the ships were to set off from the Brandenburgish port of Emden, on the western side of the Danish Sound Toll.[169] Brandenburg also bankrolled the project, with its promise of a loan to Courland. The construction of two forts, one on each side of the island, was a further divergence from the situation in St Thomas, where the Brandenburgers were not permitted to build a fort.[170] The forts in question were to be far larger, or at least more heavily armed, than any previous Couronian fort on Tobago as it was to be provided with fifty Couronian-made cannons.[171]

In terms of planting, the colony prioritised sugar with each side committing to build sugar mills. The new colony reverted to the original Couronian model from the 1650s, allowing planters to farm rent-free for three years before collecting tax, as opposed to Poyntz's seven years.[172] Colonists were to be

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[164] 'an die […] Englische und vormahlige Churlandische Vestung freyen handel treiben mögen.' Proposed contract between Brandenburg and Courland about Tobago, undated, GStA PK: I. HA Rep.9 Polen nr.7 e 1, fols. 52v.-53.

[165] 'überhäuffige lieferungen fremder nationen' and 'ganz frey'. Proposed contract between Brandenburg and Courland about Tobago, undated, GStA PK: I. HA Rep.9 Polen nr.7 e 1, fols. 54-54v.

[166] Schück and Kayser, *Brandenburg-Preussens Kolonial-Politik,* (p. 381).

[167] Rella, *Im Anfang war das Fort*, p. 115.

[168] Van der Heyden, *Rote Adler*, p.49.

[169] Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 184; Schück and Kayser, *Brandenburg-Preussens Kolonial-Politik,* (p. 379).

[170] Rella, *Im Anfang war das Fort*, p. 130.

[171] Schück and Kayser, *Brandenburg-Preussens Kolonial-Politik,* (p. 378).

[172] Ibid., (pp. 380-381).

provided with clothing and provisions if they could not afford them, as well as priests and schoolmasters with equal representation from both the Lutheran and Reformist religions.[173]

The final unfulfilled colonial system was the 1698 plans for a joint ducal and Rotterdam colony. Out of all the plans, these offer the most comprehensive description of how the colony might be run administratively, although it is not clear how complete these drafts were.[174]

The resolutions which we do have built upon the notion of rigid company processes in choosing directors and governors based on contributions from shareholders, by creating a detailed system of offices and institutions for Tobago itself. In doing so, the agreement took administrative power out of the hands of the duke, styled here as a mere ceremonial leader. Ferdinand exercised far less of a say over colonial affairs as his workaholic father attempted only a few decades previously. The Dutch company structure instead recognised the autonomy of the far-flung colony because of the metropole's inability to deal with the minutiae of colonial life from its distant position.

As well as seven districts the island administration included a council for policing, a council for trade and commerce, and a council for justice.[175] Each district accommodated a court and the island employed nine magistrates. Commissioners, chosen by the colonists themselves, had the power to appoint regional officers and set the rate of taxation.[176] Theoretically, the only aspects of colonial life controlled from Europe were the terms of commerce and the governorship. The rest could be determined by the colonists themselves. Despite these legal freedoms of self-governance, the colonial structure did bring restrictions which were somewhat alien to Couronian colonialism. Firstly, the plans excluded the possibility of accommodating denominations of Christianity other than Lutheranism and Reformism. Secondly, the Rotterdam merchants pushed for a clause which only allowed colonists to trade with outside vessels if they were Dutch. This was not only an affront to the Couronian notion of free trade, but also the English legal basis to which Ferdinand still attempted to adhere. The Couronian resolution still had the King of England as the ceremonial protector of the colony, as well as a stipulation that the colony would send a warship to England, if ever it need one in times of war.[177]

[173] Ibid., (p. 381).
[174] Documents relating to Courland and Tobago, NL-RtGAR: 33-01 Handschriften Verzameling Rotterdam, inv. nr. 3226.
[175] Menkman, 'Stukken Betrekkelijk het Eiland Tabago (p. 83).
[176] Ibid.
[177] Suggestions from the Envoy of Courland, 30 October 1690, NL-RtGAR: 33-01 Handschriften Verzameling Rotterdam, inv. nr. 3226, fols .48-49.

How Unique was Atlantic Courland?

The question of uniqueness is a tricky matter to decipher. The idea of separating colonialisms by state appeals to the idea of othering and competition, a trait prominent in many colonialisms. For example, the militaristic aims of the WIC against the Spanish and Portuguese, as well as English attempts to develop monopolies on the African coast, lend themselves to an amount of delineation. Concepts of state economy, such as mercantilism and cameralism also apply to separated concepts of distinct colonialisms. However, as recent scholarship has shown, colonial structures and systems did not form in a national vacuum. For example, Gould claims that the threat of Spanish imperial and Catholic power, motivated English colonists to pursue Native American military alliances.[178] Similarly, Oostindie and Roitman saw the Dutch empire first as being defined by opposition to Spanish and then English monopolies, as Dutch traders sought to form 'trans-imperial networks' by providing resources for use in foreign empires.[179] Consequently, one must be careful about how one uses the term 'unique' as colonialisms existing in the same space, regularly acted upon each other, thus blurring national categorisations.

The central role of the duke lends itself strongly to ideas of state planning. Colonialism increased the prestige of the duke on the world stage, compensating for a lack of domestic power and aiming to increase the economic fortunes of the metropole. Potentates, monarchs, governments, and parliaments certainly possessed significant roles in other colonies. The Iberian kings issued decrees on how their colonies should be run, whilst the Navigation Acts, strongly regulated English colonial trade. Baltic rulers were particularly involved in colonial ventures. The colonial companies of Brandenburg, Sweden, and Denmark were all founded by the ruler of those respective polities. Royals, nobles, and high officials together held 34% of shares in the Danish West India Company, whilst Queen Kristina and the powerful Oxenstierna family adopted an active role in sponsoring New Sweden.[180] Colonial interests could die without support of the ruler; Brandenburg conceded its fortresses in Africa, when King Friedrich Wilhelm I lost interest in colonial trade in 1713.[181]

However, other Baltic leaders were never quite as involved as Jakob in the running of the colonies. The other Atlantic colonies of the Baltic perpetuated their activity through companies. Although these companies were often founded in Baltic palaces, their spark was usually of Dutch origin. Benjamin Raule, a native of Vlissingen, inspired the Brandenburg Africa Company and the Brandenburg Africa America Company. The situation was similar in the Swedish African Company, in which Louis de

[178] Gould, 'Entangled Histories'.
[179] Jessica V. Roitman and Gert Oostindie, *Dutch Atlantic Connections: 1680 - 1800; Linking Empires, Bridging Borders* (Leiden: Boston, MA: Brill, 2014).
[180] Erik Gøbel, 'Danish Trade to the West Indies and Guinea, 1671–1754' in *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 31:1 (1983), 21-49 (p. 44); Stellan Dahlgren, 'New Sweden: The State, the Company and Johan Risingh' in *The Rise and Fall*, eds. Dahlgren and Norman, 1-44 (p. 18).
[181] Van der Heyden, *Rote Adler*, p.80.

Geer held an 80% share.[182] Private shipping was permitted within the Danish West India Company, if it was conducted from Danish territory. For instance, Jørgen Thormøhlen sent out seven private voyages from the Norwegian port of Bergen to the West Indies.[183] By contrast, all Couronian ventures were undertaken on ducal vessels. The duke's role was not diluted by a company as the collection of investment was handled through the duke's factor in Amsterdam. Both Jakob and Friedrich Casimir issued detailed instructions on colonial management by themselves.

Ducal authority was certainly more perceivable in a colonial context than it was in a domestic context. In the Atlantic he was able to become more involved in the minutiae of colonial decision-making. It was, after all, his personal project. Yet despite this personal influence, it would be difficult to characterise the duke's political power as absolute. The day to day running of the colony depended on ducal appointees and their ability to manage the interests of their colonists. Decisions made without the duke's input could often influence the direction of the colony. For instance, Schmoll's decision to erect a new fort and regard Amerindian populations aggressively, defined the path of his colony. Likewise, Groenewout's expedition to Sierra Leone, determined even something as basic as the geographical positioning of ducal land. Distance made it rather difficult to be a colonial absolutist and the self-governance posited by Poyntz and Brandenburg, would have made it even more challenging.

As for the debate surrounding mercantilism and cameralism, it is clear to see that a stimulation of industry and trade in the metropole was paired with colonial policies to improve the dukedom's economic fortunes. Whilst the Caribbean and Africa did not necessarily provide raw materials for goods manufactured in Courland, colonial policies provided impetus for goods that were, for instance ships and iron bars. One runs into difficulty when one discusses notions of the state. Mercantilism was not the exclusive preserve of the state, relying on a negotiated relationship between state, private individuals, corporations, and institutions. In any case, one cannot describe the ducal administration as the whole state; it was merely one part of it. Although we have proved that noble participation in Couronian colonialism was greater than once thought, ducal colonialism was hardly an issue of state. The concept of cameralism therefore applies well to the Couronian situation because it rested on a princely prerogative. Where a mercantilist policy may strive to expand productivity in all areas of the realm, the Kettler ambition was confined to ducal land and the ducal treasury. The difference between the Couronian project and typical cameralist ideas was that the Kettlers sought to expand their limited territory and resources by acquiring colonial territory, whereas other cameralists focused on exploiting only their domestic possessions. Nevertheless, the colonial venture aided the prestige and economic worth of one part of the Couronian state: the ducal estate.

[182] Dahlgren, 'New Sweden', (p. 4).
[183] Gøbel, 'Danish Trade', (p. 24).

In this situation, the private manner of the colonial project is quite stark. Jakob was a private individual who had a portion of state privileges at his disposal. As a result of the hands-on approach, one might compare the duke to the English charter holders, or the beneficiaries of WIC patronage like the Lampsins. Through the distribution of p*atroonschaps*, the WIC gave private individuals the chance to run the administration of a Caribbean island under the Dutch flag, without draining the resources of the state or the company. Jakob and Friedrich Casimir retained the right to micro-manage administration in a similar fashion. Indeed, the Kettlers derived their power from concessions given to them by larger colonists. Courland's claim to Tobago rested on their negotiation of an English charter, given to the Earl of Warwick. The 1664 treaty solidified Jakob's English claims, and in doing so subjugated the Kettlers to English regulations concerning where goods could be traded, the origin of colonists, and the preclusion of Catholicism. It was these privileges given by Charles II which would make the Kettler family so interesting to the Elector of Brandenburg and the Rotterdam merchants. This is one way in which Courland's activities intertwined with other polities.

Quite apart from being caught up in Western European concepts of colonial sovereignty, Courland's colonies displayed a great deal of similarities to their contemporaries. This was especially true of the African fort, which followed a very standard template. Like many outposts in Africa, the Courlanders depended on the provision of trade and resources by local people. Gold and mineral wealth provided significant motivation for exploration in the area, but in its absence, slaving for the Caribbean, preoccupied a great portion of activity. The Courlanders retained a distinct character in the way that they attempted to avoid European conflict in the area, unlike all other European powers, who frequently jostled for further advantages on the African coastline through violent means. Nevertheless, the Courlanders did get pulled into this world via Schulte's aid to Prince Ruprecht, and Stiel's intrigue against the Dutch and English. These independent, non-ducal decisions came as a result of Couronian interaction with the powerful combative environment other Europeans had created.

The 'republican' features of Couronian self-governance were not peculiar to Courland either. Barbados had always maintained a degree of planter autonomy, particularly before the English Civil War, when the colony strived for neutrality and maintained trading relations with the Dutch.[184] The supposedly innovative institutional approach suggested in the resolution to Rotterdam was also precedented. The Dutch colony in Suriname incorporated a planter-led council of police, for instance.[185]

Other colonies frequently employed foreign personnel to their colonies. As in the Couronian outposts, colonists and soldiers were recruited for two reasons. Firstly, to account for population deficits that

[184] Beckles, *A History of Barbados*, p. 25.
[185] Menkman, 'Stukken Betrekkelijk het Eiland Tabago, (p. 83).

could not be filled by slave labour. Secondly to ensure that populations with expertise participated in the colony. Examples of these hiring practices are abundant; we have discussed the extensive use of foreigners by the Dutch, due to problems of manpower. Likewise, it was impractical for Sweden to populate St Barthelemy with only Swedes and Danish Caribbean colonies frequently employed Germans to make up the numbers.[186] In the same way a limited number of Baltic serfs were given the chance of freedom in Courland's colonies, populations with secondary status in the metropole were afforded the chance of social mobility in the Atlantic. This was the case following heavy Irish migration to Montserrat and elsewhere, as well as to Dutch colonies.[187] Finnish migration to New Sweden is another example of the metropole sending people across the Atlantic who were from the domestic colonial periphery.

The Finnish migration to New Sweden was also a case of colonial authorities using the expertise of a particular ethnic group. Finns were prized, according to Gunnlög Fur, as experts in forestry and therefore assumed to be well-suited to the Eastern coast of America.[188] Occasionally colonial companies would also select high ranking officers based on their impressive experience and connections. The Dutch on the River Gambia, employed Justo Baque as a commercial officer and would have been aided by his Portuguese background, useful for interacting with the influential Luso-Africans of the Senegambia region.[189]

The use of foreigners as colonists came as a necessity for smaller colonial outfits such as Courland. The feature diminishes the notion of uniformly national colonies which is implied by using national labels. Moreover, the practice of penetrating other colonial systems, eschewing the principle of monopoly, and the presence of free ports, further weakens the concept of colonialisms being separate. All these features were vital to the survival of Couronian colonies, which often did not possess the resources to maintain colonial settlements, nor the demand in Courland to sustain colonial trade. Thus, slaves were offered to Spain, timber was sold in Barbados, and Tobagonian planters were permitted to sell to foreign ships. Whilst Jakob was reluctant to share colonial authority until his project fell on hard times, Courland's colonial output was not just meant for Courland. The principle of extending one's base of customers by rejecting exclusionary trading practices also played to the Couronian attempt at neutrality, which was designed not only to safeguard a vulnerable geopolitical position, but also to attract as much commerce as possible.

[186] Han Jordaan and Victor Wilson, 'The Eighteenth Century Danish, Dutch and Swedish Free Ports in the Northeastern Caribbean' in *Dutch Atlantic Connections*, eds. Roitman and Oostindie, 273-308.
[187] Akenson, *If the Irish Ran the World*; Boomert, 'The Earliest Dutch Fortifications', (p. 34).
[188] Fur, *Colonialism in the Margins*; Jonas M. Nordin, 'Tactile Relations: Material Entanglement between Sweden and its Colonies' in *Facing Otherness,* eds. Naum and Ekengren, 87-103 (p. 215).
[189] Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa*.

Although following a particular ducal outlook, the Couronian approach imitated and was followed by a significant number of colonial interests in the Atlantic. The English, for instance, succeeded in providing trade to the under-resourced Spanish Americas from the 1660s.[190] The Dutch, unable to establish an expansive presence in the Caribbean, became carriers, helping to further the development of the French Antilles, Barbados, and the Spanish Americas by providing slaves and other cargo.[191] Courland and Brandenburg attempted to follow in these footsteps by offering annual shipments of slaves to Spain. Crucial to the development of this system was the deployment of neutral trading entrepôts, such as Curaçao and St Eustatius for the Dutch, and St Thomas for the Danes. This formulation of survival via offering neutral trade to other colonies could both bring success or stave off extinction. In the most desperate moments of the Couronian colony, colonial administrators turned to Barbados as a market for timber. Such practices can be compared with the ducal offer of ships, weaponry, and other goods all over Europe, to extend ducal prestige and wealth. In this way, Courland attempted to become a niche polity in the Caribbean, offering services to neighbouring colonies to survive the competitive Atlantic economy.

Conclusion

The involvement of the dukes contributed heavily to the distinctiveness of the Couronian colonies in the seventeenth century, at a time where companies were the standard for Atlantic pursuits. Detailed micro-management, particularly by Jakob, set the dukes apart from other potentates. Indeed, the dukes acted more as private company owners and charter holders than heads of state. Nevertheless, much was out of ducal control, and the governors, officials and colonists were heavily involved in determining the character and fate of the colony.

The expertise of Courland's governors was varied and diverse, often indicating the position of colonial development. In the beginning, the governors were often ship's captains, assisted by military men with Atlantic experience. When it became clear that the powers of governor and director should be separated, dependable men who had proven experience took the helm. When the colonies struggled to be re-established, military men took over to try and found robust strongholds. Thinking for the long-term, Friedrich Casimir chose politicians and diplomats as governors who could create a society and interact well with the neighbours.

The inhabitants of Courland's colonies were necessarily diverse in their ethnic background and favoured a policy of semi-free trade. This was not unusual in contemporary colonies, particularly those which were too small to be self-sufficient in population and trade. Courland's neutrality is an additional factor which would have facilitated the creation of broader trade relations. The remarkably

[190] Storrs, 'Foreign Penetration'.
[191] Victor Enthoven, 'Neutrality: Atlantic Shipping in and after the Anglo-Dutch Wars' in *Mercantilism Reimagined,* eds. Stern and Wennerlind, 328-348 (p. 331).

open policies towards serfs and non-Lutherans were part of this process of attracting as many colonists and traders as possible, one which was diminished when the duke was forced into association with other parties. The policy of freedom for serfs was unusual given Courland's Baltic context, but religious toleration was borrowed from the Polish-Lithuanian background. The emancipation of serf colonists, indicate that some Latvians may have been involved, but the domestic situation of the Latvian peasantry, in other words, the low availability of Latvian populations and the distrust of Latvian soldiers, make it unlikely that they travelled in large numbers.

Similar to the ethnic diversity matter, the so-called 'republican' and autonomous features of Courland's colony are remarkable but not particular to Courland. Dutch colonies and Barbados also possessed self-governmental institutions. These plans were also only proposals which were not enacted, and so they are only indications of ducal colonial ideas. In the colonies themselves, policy was often formed around the principle of survival. This is why timber trade to Barbados was prioritised and why Couronian governors engaged in the competitive nature of colonialism in order to obtain allies or root out interlopers who threatened their status. There was thus no guarantee that the dukes' instructions would have been fully realised.

Chapter Five: Couronian Contact with Indigenous Cultures

The ducal attempts to penetrate the Atlantic sphere from the Eastern Baltic, brought the duchy to unfamiliar spaces. It also instigated encounters with indigenous peoples and cultures, with which Couronians had never previously corresponded. The duchy entered a space in which indigenous structures and practices predominated, although by the mid-seventeenth century there had already been substantial European contact. It is the Couronian handling of these societies which concerns the discussion of this chapter.

The inhabitants of the Lesser Antilles and the area around the River Gambia were diverse peoples and it is entirely unsatisfactory to conflate these societies under one category: 'indigenous' or 'non-European'. The varying practices, institutions, and contexts of what became Atlantic, colonial spaces will have shaped Couronian experience in varying ways. The distinctness of the people encountered by those working for the duke must therefore be properly uncovered to explain the course of Couronian overseas endeavours. The grouping of indigenous interactions into one chapter is an insufficient way of considering indigenous societies as the differences between the local peoples of the Lesser Antilles and Senegambia were vast, even within the regions themselves. It is required for the sake of brevity for this chapter to consider the role of indigenous people together, but within these constraints it is important to regard these people not just as antithetical to Europe, but as distinct agents with varied contexts.

To date, only Boomert has engaged Couronian colonialism with a deep analysis of indigenous societies.[1] Otherwise studies of the European, African, and Caribbean contexts have been separated when discussing Courland. Use of the ducal archives occasionally serves to block efforts to consider indigenous peoples. Non-Europeans are seldom mentioned in sources from the ducal archives. Diplomatic correspondence arguing for the duke's 'rights' over Tobago and St Andreas' Island regularly omitted indigenous considerations. Encounters described by colonial officials such as Mollens or Schulte, are rare.[2] Moreover, they regard indigenous cultures from a point of misunderstanding and prejudice, enforcing a European civilising narrative.

Noack's call for a post-colonial handling of the Couronian Caribbean and Gambia have largely remained unheeded. Although historians of Courland have been interested in the Couronian handling of indigenous people, it has mostly been from a European perspective.[3] Viewing the duke's project from a non-European perspective is highly useful. This approach serves to qualify comments from

[1] Boomert, 'Amerindian- European Encounters'; Arie Boomert, *The Indigenous Peoples*; Boomert, et al. Omar R. Troncoso and Herman Hendrik van Regteren Altena, 'Archaeological-Historical Survey'.
[2] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, pp. 451-453; Mattiesen, 'Ein Tagebuch'.
[3] Jakovļeva, 'Jauns Avots'; Rella, *Im Anfang war das Fort*; Anderson, 'The Couronians and the West Indies'; Jekabson-Lemanis, 'Balts in the Caribbean'; Berķis, *The Reign of Duke James*.

Berķis and Anderson who saw the Couronians as comparatively ethical and liberal in their encounters with indigenous people and even slaves.[4] A post-colonial perspective highlights that the main aim of Couronian colonialism was still exploitation and that Couronian encounters with non-European people were framed around these objectives.

Slavery itself is a very-underrepresented topic in the historiography of Courland, despite Mattiesen claiming that it was the industry upon which Couronian interests were built.[5] Many German-Baltic and Latvian historians, such as Seraphim and Berķis have professed retrospective regret that the duke they so often praise sought to profit from slave labour.[6] Problematically, there are very few available sources discussing the Couronian slave trade and proof of its existence are often found only in indirect references.

Despite the absence of slavery in the sources, the Couronian experience can still offer a new angle on the topic. The Baltic region's colonised past and particularly the extensive use of strict serfdom in Livonia, creates thematic links between exploitation in the Atlantic and the Baltic spaces. The post-colonial aspect of Latvia's past and the memory of Courland's Atlantic colonialism has been discussed by Merritt and Sooman, et al.[7] However, this dynamic between Baltic colonialism and Atlantic colonialism has not been discussed in terms of ducal colonial policy or the use of Baltic colonial knowledge in the Atlantic. This is a large gap in historiography as it is the Couronian context of domestic colonisation which enables one to distinguish Couronian approaches in the Atlantic from other European colonisers.

This chapter aims to draw together the many different perspectives in order to build an informed and deep picture of how indigenous people and Couronian colonisers encountered each other. Such an investigation requires Couronian behaviour to be paired with a knowledge of the indigenous contexts in which these activities operated. This approach will go some way to considering indigenous perspectives from outside of the European narrative, which have so far been missing from the historiography. In addition, it will attempt to evaluate Couronian knowledge of the New World and its societies, taking into account the potentially similar conditions which existed in the Baltic during the same period.

The Amerindian Context in Tobago and the Networks of the Lesser Antilles

Narratives on the indigenous people of the Caribbean have been dominated by the dichotomy of 'Carib' and 'Arawak'. The distinction originated from the writings of early Spanish explorers who claimed to have encountered a 'docile' Arawak people and an 'aggressive' Carib people in the

[4] Andersons, *Senie Kurzemnieki Amerikā,* p. 366 and 368; Berķis, The Reign of Duke James, p. 78.
[5] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik*, p.304.
[6] Berķis, The Reign of Duke James, p. 72; Seraphim, 'Kurland unter den Herzögen', (p. 532).
[7] Merritt, 'The Colony of the Colonized'; Sooman et al., 'From the Port of Ventspils'.

Caribbean. Christopher Columbus praised the Arawak as being handsome and innocent as the Spanish initially formed clement relations with Arawak-speaking groups.[8] From the Taíno, an Arawak group of the Greater Antilles, they heard that there was a monstrous people in the Caribbean who were violent cannibals. Spanish colonialists, intending to use this superlative testimony to their favour, used this terminology to describe any indigenous group, mainly in the Lesser Antilles where Arawak populations were weaker, who resisted the European presence in the West Indies. These hostile peoples were named Carib in reference to the intimidating figures of the Taíno narrative.[9] Northern Europeans adopted this framework for describing Amerindians in the Caribbean. Although the stereotypes of violence and cannibalism have been challenged, the narrative of 'Arawak' and 'Carib' has pervaded so comprehensively that several modern works of Caribbean history have utilised it, exposing the field's attachment to dominant European discourses.[10]

Broadly, the distinction between Arawak and Carib has been convenient for comparing the differences between those predominantly inhabiting the Lesser Antilles (excluding Trinidad) and Caribbean Amerindians elsewhere. The people of the Lesser Antilles were less agriculturally inclined than 'Arawak' in the Greater Antilles. Instead, fishing and horticulture formed a greater part of 'Carib' subsistence.[11] Carib communities were often centred around small villages where a headman would rule. This contrasted with Arawak societies which typically included chiefs and sub-chiefs to administrate over a collection of villages. Carib villages only united into larger entities in times of conflict where a war chief would be nominated.[12] The Carib and Arawak were often said to be at war with each other, and sometimes one would object if European settlers allied with the other.[13] This notion supports the idea that the Caribs were relatively new fourteenth and fifteenth century arrivals, having invaded the Lesser Antilles from South America.[14]

The binary categorisation obscures a more complex reality of Amerindian identities, networks, and interactions in the Caribbean. The terms 'Carib' and 'Arawak' encompass many different peoples, many of whom overlapped. Many scholars of Caribbean anthropology now designate Arawak and

[8] Alissandra Cummins, 'European Views of the Aboriginal Population' in *The Indigenous People of the Caribbean*, ed. Samuel Meredith Wilson (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1999), 46-55 (pp.46-47).
[9] William F. Keegan, 'Columbus was a Cannibal: Myth and the First Encounters' in *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion*, ed. Robert L. Paquette (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 17-32 (pp.18-21); Saunders, *The Peoples of the Caribbean,* p. xv.
[10] Saunders, *The Peoples of the Caribbean;* Burns, *History of the British West Indies*; Jan Rogoziński, *A Brief History of the Caribbean: From the Arawak and the Carib to the Present* (New York: Facts on File, 1999).
[11] Saunders, *The Peoples of the Caribbean*, p. xv.
[12] Rogoziński, *A Brief History of the Caribbean*, pp. 16-17.
[13] For instance, Dutch settlers were attacked on Tobago for their good relations with the Arawak people in Trinidad.
[14] Saunders, *The Peoples of the Caribbean*, p. xv.

Carib as linguistic indicators rather than ethnic.[15] The island of Trinidad is an excellent example of Amerindian diversity. Although the Taíno of the Greater Antilles spoke an Arawak language, they are distinct in culture and self-identification to the Arawak-speakers of Trinidad who retain a stronger connection to South American Arawak. The major Arawak groups on Trinidad, the Lokono, the Guyanans, and the Stebaio resided in the central part of the territory.[16] The Lokono became particularly aligned with Spanish settlers, aiding them against the Carib-speaking Nepoio and the Tobagonian Dutch in 1636.

The Caribs of the Lesser Antilles and South America possessed distinctive dialects and habits from island to island, however they can be roughly divided into two sub-groups. The Kali'na, otherwise known as the Mainland Caribs or Galibis arrived in the Lesser Antilles as a result of a migration from Guiana and Venezuela, where most of their population still resided in the seventeenth century.[17] In the Caribbean, they were to be found on Tobago and Grenada. The Island Carib inhabited most other islands in the Lesser Antilles. However, as European expansion and disease exerted demographic strain, the strongholds became St Vincent, Dominica, and St Lucia. The Island Caribs spoke a language closer to Arawak than the Kali'na. In fact, Island Carib females spoke an Arawak language separate to males. The linguistic gender difference has resulted in a nominal distinction with females being referred to as Kali'puna and males as Kali'nago.[18] The latter has occasionally become synonymous with the Island Carib given the significant interaction males engaged in through war and trade. The male language was formed through these activities, as it was a type of Carib/ Arawak pidgin language, useful for conversing with Kali'na in South America.[19]

There appears to have been a very significant level of solidarity and mobility between Kali'nago and Kali'na settlements. The Kali'nago origin myth asserts that they were originally Kali'na from South America.[20] The islands of St Vincent, Grenada, and Dominica were also very keen to aid militarily when other islanders were being abused by European settlers. The islanders on St Vincent massacred a group of previously welcome French Jesuits in 1654 due to ill-treatment of indigenous people by French settlers on St Lucia, Guadeloupe, and Martinique.[21] The willingness Kali'nagos displayed to support other islands, presents the nature of their social and economic networks. The Island Caribs

[15] Arie Boomert, 'Crossing the Galleon's Passage: Amerindians Interaction and Cultural (Dis)Unity between Trinidad and Tobago' in *Journal of Caribbean Archaeology*, 3 (2010), 106-121 and Wilson, *The Indigenous People of the Caribbean*.
[16] Boomert, 'Crossing the Galleon's Passage', (p. 109).
[17] Louis Allaine, 'The Caribs of the Lesser Antilles' in *The Indigenous People of the Caribbean*, ed. Wilson, 179-185 (p. 180 and p. 185).
[18] Ibid., (p. 180) and Vincent O. Cooper, 'Language and Gender among the Kalinago of Fifteenth Century St. Croix' in *The Indigenous People of the Caribbean*, ed. Wilson, 186-196 (p. 191).
[19] Cooper, 'Language and Gender', (p. 191).
[20] Boomert, *The Indigenous Peoples*, p. 9.
[21] Boomert, 'Amerindian-European Encounters', (p. 132).

expertly developed canoes (called pirogues) to quickly communicate between islands. Networks of communications were strengthened through trade, gift-giving, and intermarriage. The Kali'nago would also value seemingly empty islands because they offered useful spaces for seasonal hunting, fishing, and horticultural farming activities; what is referred to as a 'commuter economy'.[22] The island of Guadeloupe, for instance, possessed vegetable gardens on Marie Galante.[23] Thus, Kali'nago life was never constrained to just one island territory.

The island of Tobago was one such island which appeared uninhabited. The island was sparsely populated with Kali'na villages.[24] According to Boomert, the Kali'na of Tobago had initially strong relations with the Carib people of Trinidad which manifested itself in trading activity. Archaeological evidence from between 650-800 AD indicates a high degree of cultural similarity between the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago. However, after this period the quality of production seems to have shifted towards lower-quality coarse, open bowls, which are associated with Caribs elsewhere in the Lesser Antilles. This evidence is proof that Tobagonian material culture shifted in orientation towards exchange with the Kali'nago.[25] Indeed, the Kali'nago visited often. Willem Mollens' report from 11 August 1654 indicated a great frequency of visits from St Vincent.[26] Tobago was a useful stopping point between the Windward Islands and the Americas; the people of Tobago may have offered some mediation between traders from these areas as well as those from Trinidad.

The importance of Tobago for the Kali'nago caused significant difficulties for European settlers. Juan Rodriguez of Spain abandoned a colony after four months in 1614 due to resistance from St Vincent and Grenada. Opposition to Spanish colonists would have been enflamed due to the activities of Trinidad's governor, Antonio de Berrío, who attempted to slave in Tobago.[27] Settlers from Zeeland found some trading success with the Kali'na on the island, exchanging textiles and metalwork for tobacco, hides, and cocoa. The Dutch also enjoyed a partial alliance with settlements from Trinidad connected to their opposition to the Spanish. The Kali'na seemed to initially tolerate European newcomers and that attitude continued into the latter half of the seventeenth century as they traded with both Schmoll's colonists and Crijnssen's expedition from the United Provinces.[28] In 1654, according to Couronian accounts, the Dutch had secured Kali'na friendship by exchanging hostages.[29] However, it was often not long before these colonies suffered Kali'nago attacks, primarily from St

[22] Philip P. Boucher, *Cannibal Encounters: Europeans and Island Caribs, 1482-1763*, (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 36.
[23] Boomert, 'Amerindian-European Encounters', (p. 119).
[24] C.R. Ottley, *The Story of Tobago: Robinson Crusoe's Island in the Caribbean* (London: Longman, 1973), p. 4.
[25] Saunders, *The Peoples of the Caribbean*, p. 292; Boomert, *The Indigenous Peoples*, p. 52.
[26] Mattiesen, *Die Kolonial und Überseepolitik*, p. 451.
[27] Boomert, *The Indigenous Peoples*, p. 106.
[28] Mattiesen, *Kolonial und Überseepolitik*, p. 177; Boomert, *The Indigenous Peoples*, p. 122.
[29] Historical Society of Trinidad and Tobago. 'A Pamphlet', pp. 1-2.

Vincent, Grenada, and Dominica. It is possible that a brief European interaction for the purposes of trade was accepted, but a permanent settlement created tensions. Another reason, often cited at the time, was the Kali'nago intolerance of Dutch amicability with the Trinidadian Arawak, the supposed cause of Cornelius Caron's expulsion from Tobago in 1642.[30]

The Kali'nago also contributed to the downfall of English forts, which already struggled with disease. The Earl of Warwick's three attempts to colonise Tobago in 1639, 1642, and 1647 all suffered bloody responses. John Scott claimed that the Spanish settlers of Tobago had informed the Kali'nago that the English were forming an alliance with the Arawak against them.[31] The fate of Tobago's European settlers caused the island to become notorious as a dangerous place to colonise. Scott wrote, 'Tobago, as is apparent from its history, was one of the worst sites on which to plant a colony'.[32] Joannes de Laet remarked in 1630 that on Tobago 'it is all good soil, but it is uninhabited because of the malicious natives of the island of Dominica'.[33]

The military alliance between Dominica, St Vincent, and Grenada is a prominent theme in Kali'nago responses to European activities in the Lesser Antilles. The interesting work of Schafie et al. on Caribbean networks of violence shows that collaboration was most frequent between St Vincent and Dominica. St Vincent, the main source of raiding, fostered strong alliances with Martinique and Grenada, as well as weak alliances with Tobago, St Lucia, Guadeloupe, and the mainland.[34] Here we see that Tobago was one part of a larger Caribbean-wide struggle led from St Vincent and Dominica. This resistance is crucial to the context with which the Duke of Courland's settlers were engaging.

The European presence had disturbed a vast network of economic and cultural interaction which formed over sea routes. European antagonism on other islands was seen as a threat to a broader structure of Kali'nago life. This is not to say that the Kali'nago always responded violently. Increasingly, the Kali'nago turned to sophisticated diplomacy, particularly as their numbers dropped. In 1660 a treaty was made with the French and in 1668 with the English. Occasionally alliances were used to play competing European powers off each other. For instance, the Kali'nago allied with the French in 1679 and aided them with the brief capture of English Antigua in 1666/1667.[35]

However, the indigenous people of the Lesser Antilles were generally vehemently opposed to European intrusions. Jean-Baptiste Labat commented that 'there are no people in the world so jealous

[30] George Edmundson, 'The Dutch in Western Guiana' in *English Historical Review* 16:64 (1901), 640-675 (p. 647); Scott, 'The Description of Tobago', (p. 116).
[31] Boomert, 'Amerindian-European Encounters', (p. 115).
[32] Jekabson-Lemanis, 'Balts in the Caribbean', (p. 34).
[33] Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean*, p. 433.
[34] Termeh Shafie, David Schoch, Jimmy Mans, Corinne Hofman and Ulrik Brandes, 'Hypergraph Representations: A Study of Carib Attacks on Colonial Forces, 1509-1700' in *Journal of Historical Network Research*, 1 (2017), 52-70 (pp. 56-60).
[35] Rogoziński, *A Brief History of the Caribbean*, p. 97.

of their liberty or who resent the smallest check on their freedom'.[36] The remark was critical, but the indigenous outrage is understandable. The vast migration of Europeans and Africans to the Caribbean had brought violence and diseases, such as smallpox, malaria, and measles. Historically, the Amerindians had witnessed the effect of Spanish slavery, which worked many indigenous people to death. It is estimated that the number of 'Caribs' had fallen from 15,000 to 7,000 by the seventeenth century.[37] The European hunger for plantation land restricted the functionality of indigenous economic and social activity. As the indigenous economy was so interconnected, European incursions on even the emptiest of islands were seen as a threat. An English attempt to settle St Lucia, for instance, broke the English-St Vincent peace treaty of 1668. In response colonial officials, such as Governor William Stapleton of Barbados, pushed for the extermination of the Carib people. Hilary Beckles has referred to the Kali'nago resistance to European settlers as a fight against capitalism.[38] This is anachronistic; capitalism was not known to the Kali'nago. However, the profit-focused model of European settlement in the Caribbean, which allowed little space for indigenous involvement, was a very tangible threat to Amerindian existence. Tobago was key to this existence as it slotted into an intricate trading network, providing links between the Windward Islands and Guiana.

In All Friendship: Cooperation on Tobago

Cooperation was the instruction sent with the Couronian colonists from the duke. Mollens was compelled to interact in a friendly manner with indigenous people and to construct diplomatic ties. In August 1654 Mollens reported that he had spoken to 'five savage chiefs' on Tobago, who were likely Kali'na. The chiefs informed him of local power structures and relations. Mollens remarked that:

> 'Each chief controls 25 men and has his own canoe made from hollow wood. With their 25 men they leave for war against the Arawak who live on Trinidad island and on the mainland. These Ariwaks arrive here in 50 to 60 boats each carrying 25 men. Our islanders are very afraid of these Ariwaks, as they came devilishly strong and start major fights'.[39]

Mollens voiced his intention to befriend the Arawak as well, despite his opinion that they were 'enemies of all Christians'. Mollens proposed to achieve this through the trade of axes, glass mirrors, and knives for hammocks.[40]

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[36] Hilary Beckles, 'Kalinago (Carib) Resistance to European Colonisation of the Caribbean' in *A Journal of Caribbean Culture*, 54: 4 (2008), 77-94 (p. 81).
[37] Boomert, 'Amerindian-European Encounters', (p. 145).
[38] Beckles, 'Kalinago (Carib) Resistance', (p. 80).
[39] 'Jeder Häuptling von 25 Mann und jeder Häuptling hat sein eigenes Kanoo, welches Kanoo aus einem ausgehöhlten Baum gemacht ist. Allwo er mit seinen 25 Mann zum Kriege gegen ein Volk, Ariwaks genannt, fährt, welches Volk auf Trinidad wohnt und auf dem Festlande. Diese Ariwaks kommen 50 oder 60 Kanoos stark her, jedes 25 oder 30 Mann. Unsere Insulaner sind sehr bang vor den Ariwaks, wenn sie kommen, weil sie höllisch stark sind, so machen sie große Gefechte.' Mattiesen, *Kolonial und Überseepolitik*, p. 453.
[40] 'Feind mit allen Christen.' Ibid.

According to Scott, Duke Jakob held indigenous opinions in high regard. Scott claimed that the Couronians first arrived on Tobago in 1634 and sought authorisation of settlement from the Tobago natives. The Courlanders apparently 'purchased it [Tobago] and the Natives gave him a cleare possession dispersing themselves to Guiana to Trinidada and some of them to Saint Vincents'. Scott described a similar agreement in 1639.[41] There is no evidence for Courland arriving in Tobago at this early stage, let alone for the agreement of an indigenous contract. Interactions with indigenous people are not mentioned in the Duke of Courland's various diplomatic arguments to regain Tobago, for instance in Abraham Marin's correspondence with King Charles II or the '*Korte Deductie'*.[42]

It is highly doubtful that the Kali'na or Kali'nago would give such rights to an unknown group of European colonists, given Tobago's importance in the commuter economy. Nonetheless, the initial colony of the 1650s did not encounter any significant issues regarding large-scale Kali'nago attacks. This cannot be explained by a shifting attitude towards Europeans by the Kali'nago. As previously discussed, Dutch and English colonies had struggled to settle because of Amerindian resistance. This is noted by the Couronian map of 1654, possibly annotated by Mollens himself. On the eastern side of the island at what is now Tyrrel's Bay is written: 'English harbour where some English had lived which was massacred by the savages.' The map remarks that the 'savages are still there'.[43] The Couronians therefore knew that they were dealing with people who had been antagonistic to Europeans in the past.

The Couronians took measures to counter this threat. The new Fort Jacobus, built in 1654, was situated neighbouring an indigenous village. It is depicted on a separate Couronian, map also from the 1650s, directly south-east of the Couronian fort.[44] The placement of the fort was also influenced by the convenient natural harbour formed by Great Courland Bay and the fresh water provided by Courland River. However, proximity to a Kali'na village will have signalled the intention of the Courlanders to be in close contact with the original inhabitants of Tobago - presumably for the purposes of trade and the exchange of local knowledge.

As a businessman, Jakob respected indigenous people as potential trading partners. He wrote to Monck in July 1681:

> 'we have never lived in enmity with the savages, and have always fostered good friendships with them…you will endeavour to renew our old friendship and let them know… that we will help to protect them from their enemies, and act beneficially to

[41] Scott, 'The Description of Tobago', pp. 114-115.
[42] 'Brieve Deduction' of Abraham Marin, Envoy of the Duke of Courland to the Court of Charles II, 15 May 1680, TNA: SP 88/15 fol. 90v.; Anon, *Korte Deductie*.
[43] 'Eenglis harbor allwar enich Engels haben gewonet boi denwelker war dooadgeslegen von den wilden' and 'den wilden sin noch doorin'. Couronian map of Tobago, 1654, LVVA: 7363, apr. 3, l. 111, fol. 545.
[44] Boomert, *The Indigenous Peoples*, p. 60.

them. Formerly both sides had exchanged hostages to seal our friendship, and we could arrange such an exchange with them again and continue to trade with them'.[45]

The duke implied here that Mollens had apparently succeeded in establishing the trade and good understanding needed, as Charles de Rochefort condescendingly put it, 'to tame them'.[46] He also reveals that the Couronians sent hostages mirroring the three hostages Becquard gave to the Kali'na in 1654. It may be that one of the Couronian governors of the 1680s succeeded in sending a hostage back to Europe as the 1689 ducal accounts listed expenditure on a 'Tobagonian child'.[47]

By 1681, Jakob's claims of friendship were outdated. Monck travelled to replace Benet, who had been chased from Tobago by Kali'nago raiders, and proceeded to treat the indigenous people with suspicion and hostility.[48] This approach contradicted Jakob's plea to 'endeavour to live with all neighbouring kings, as well as with the wild ones of the locale, so far as is possible, in good friendship' and to fight only in self-defence.[49] In John Poyntz, Jakob found someone who also overestimated the attraction of European trade to ever-more constrained indigenous communities. Poyntz claimed that the people of Trinidad 'will bring their Products to us rather than the Spaniards, for we can give them double the price the Spaniards do'.[50] Although Poyntz's theory was never tested, there is proof that the Kali'na were at least slightly enthused by Couronian trading. Jan Waebes described how, in 1686, the Kali'na gave the Courlanders fish 'in all friendship' and that thirty indigenous people visited the fort in welcome.[51] This initial friendliness, followed by several deadly raids from the sea, could have happened for several reasons. The local villagers may have expected that the Courlanders only sought temporary trade and would leave after a short time. Another possibility is that the Kali'na, not powerful enough to oppose the new colony themselves, tolerated a small European colony due to a proximity which the Kali'nago attackers, beleaguered by Europeans on many different islands, did not possess.

Uniquely for a European plantation economy, neighbouring Amerindians were apparently also welcome to participate in the colony as free landholders. Matthias Beck visited New Courland for

[45] 'weil wir hiebevor mit den wilden niemahlen in streit gelebet sondern jeder zeit gute freundschafft gepflogen […] so werdet ihr sehen, sothane alte freundschafft wiederumb mit ihnen zugefallen leben sie vor ihnen zu erneuen und ihnen zu verstehen geben, zu laßen worinnen wir ihnen zugefallen leben sie vor ihren feinden schützen helffen und sonsten prositlich sein könten und weilen wie hiebevor zur beschäftigung solcher freundschafft von beyden seiten geiseln einander gegeben, so könnte man es wieder also mit ihnen halten und also den handel mit ihnen wieder fortsetzen'. Mattiesen, *Kolonial und Überseepolitik*, p. 756.
[46] 'um sie dadurch zu zähmen'. De Rochefort, *Beschreibung von Tabago*, p. 77.
[47] Sooman et al., 'From the Port of Ventspils', (p. 510).
[48] Boomert, 'Amerindian-European Encounters', (p. 142).
[49] 'Sie sollen sich bemühen mit alle benachtbahrte Könige, imgleichen mit den wilden der örther, soviel müglich, in gutte freundtschafft zu leben'. Copy of the Instructions from Duke Jakob to Johann de Lech and Robert Bennet, given to the Duke's Accountant, Christoph Calau, 1 November 1670, LVVA: 554, apr. 1, l. 2621, fol. 17.
[50] Poyntz, *The Present Prospect* (1695), p. 49.
[51] Boomert, 'Amerindian- European Encounters', (p. 142).

eight weeks in 1654 and commented on who could own land there. According to the interpretation of this letter by Anderson and Jekabson-Lemanis, Beck observed that native inhabitants could receive thirty Morgens of land in the colony. This allowance was the same afforded to former European serfs.[52] The decision to provide land to indigenous people was certainly distinctive among other colonisers in the Caribbean. Christoph Rella, in his German-language book on European forts, was amusingly so surprised at this approach that he communicated it to his reader in English so that there was a smaller chance that a foreign reader could misinterpret him.[53] The Couronian colony's decision was undoubtedly more conciliatory than its contemporaries, who excluded Caribbean people from owning plantations. The exceptions were those who were used as slaves. Beck did not disclose how many indigenous people accepted the Couronian offer. However, it is likely that the Courlanders were being very presumptive about what the Kali'na people wanted. By co-opting indigenous people into the colony, they brought them into a European system. The settlers would have been expected to grow crops such as sugar and tobacco for the European market. It is unclear whether Kali'na would also have had these expectations. In any case, the Courlanders expected that the indigenous people would rather uproot their traditional social structure in order to be absorbed into an intensive European plantation which revolved around profit and subjection to a distant duke. The concession also ignored the importance the island held for commuter farmers who would gain little benefit from landed possession in the European style. Incidentally it was this group of people, the Kali'nago, who were most likely to take exception to Couronian colonisation.

Violence on the Island of Tobago

The efforts of Jakob and his governors to calm the indigenous threat was clearly unsuccessful. Although the years between 1654 and 1658 were comparatively peaceful compared to post-1660, violence against Couronian colonists began within the first month of arrival. On 20 June 1654, Willem Brandt and Cornelis Hannsen were murdered. A third colonist suffered this fate soon after. The social identity of the killers and their motivations are unclear. Mollens implied that he blamed the Kali'nago, telling Duke Jakob in August 1654 that 'I will one day get my revenge for what they have done to us'.[54]

Although Mollens pursued a policy of amicability with Amerindian people, his statements imply that the murders had diminished his enthusiasm. He expressed his distaste for Kali'nago visits to Tobago even when they were not hostile. 'A lot of people arrive here,', he complained to Jakob, 'real savages from St Vincent island. From here they travel to the mainland. There are also those who arrive from the mainland. They cause problems, disturbing the peace, which does not help and certainly does not

[52] Jekabson-Lemanis, 'Balts in the Caribbean', (p. 39).
[53] Rella, *Im Anfang war das Fort*, p. 122.
[54] 'Ich werde ihnen wiedergeben, was sie uns angetan haben.' Mattiesen, *Kolonial und Überseepolitik*, p. 453.

help your highness'.[55] Mollens displayed intolerance of entrenched indigenous activity, of Kali'nago mobility and the commuter economy. He objected to Tobago being a stop-off position for travel to South America, regarding the Kali'nago as interlopers and in doing so, exposing his ignorance of how indigenous activity in the Caribbean functioned. Whilst Mollens may have been content to deal amicably with Kali'na villages, he did not seem mentally prepared to do the same with outsiders. Mollens' attitude echoed the approach of his Dutch neighbours on Tobago. De Rochefort described the practice of fortifying houses and constructing lookouts to prevent Kali'nago landfall.[56] The account presents an anxiety whereby any indigenous canoe on the horizon could be a raiding party rather than a trading party. Kali'nago vessels could arrive as both. The high amount of Kali'nago traffic was the primary point of conflict in the 1650s. Kali'nago traders saw European incursions into an important economic meeting point as another affront to indigenous structures. Couronian officials, such as Mollens, perceived regular visitations as a disruption which endangered his colonists.

Despite these concerns, the original Couronian colony of the 1650s survived until 1659. Dutch claims that the Courlanders had been cowed by indigenous attacks were exaggerated.[57] In the latter half of the century the description was more apt and all colonies after 1668 encountered problems with raids. In 1669, one Kali'nago raid upon Moritz Carsten's colony killed nineteen, prompting Carstens to call for further military reinforcements.[58] Despite the good intentions of his instructions, Robert Benet was forced to leave the island in 1680 as the Kali'nago took advantage of his colony's ill health.

The 1680s signalled a change in strategy, albeit one that was not sanctioned from Mitau. Monck and Schmoll did initially show willingness to trade locally with neighbouring Kali'na with some success. Yet when raiding threatened their harbours, they deployed violent countermeasures. Monck experienced attacks on his fort upon arrival. His enemies were a mixture of St Lucia and St Vincent Kali'nago, supported by the French. Monck reacted with reprisals on the local population; even Berķis admitted that the governor had shown 'great cruelty' towards the indigenous population.[59] Two reports, one addressed to Governor Lynch in November 1682 and another by Cornelis Gilde in October 1683, tells us that Carib hostility only intensified thereafter. Lynch placed the blame firmly on Monck who he described as 'sottish and arbitrary'.[60]

More concrete evidence of violence is provided in regard to Schmoll. Canoe fleets of 800 people, including vessels which, by Waebes' account, bore the French standard, arrived to find Schmoll's

[55] 'Hierher kommen stets viel Menschen: etliche Wilde mit Canoos aus St. Vincent und gehen nach dem Festlande weiter, und kommen von Festlande hierher, so daß sie uns Schwierigkeiten machen, keinen Frieden halten, nicht gütlich helfen und E. Fstl. Dchl. Beistehen.' Ibid.
[56] De Rochefort, *Beschreibung von Tabago*, p. 77.
[57] Mattiesen, *Kolonial und Überseepolitik*, pp. 477-478.
[58] Boomert, 'Amerindian- European Encounters', (p. 137).
[59] Berkis, *The Reign of Duke James*, p. 184.
[60] Archibald, *Tobago*, pp. 33.

unfinished fort and brought ruin upon it.[61] The Kali'nago pirogues ushered in the end of the amicable relationship the Courlanders maintained with the Kali'na. Having suffered losses at the hands of the Kali'nago, Schmoll turned his ire towards the Kali'na settlement at Crown Point, which he attacked despite it not containing any enemy pirogues. In doing so Schmoll equated the Kali'nago with the Kali'na, recognising the strong networks between the two groups, but not questioning the diversity of their communities. Schmoll's reaction seems to have solidified the enmity of the Courlanders for the Kali'nago who continued to attack the colony until the ducal Tobagonian project was considered untenable.

Although the dukes attempted to stress the uniqueness and amicability of their interactions with indigenous people, it was all for nought because of the wider experience of the Kali'nago in the Lesser Antilles. Tobago was just one part of a broader Kali'nago network of islands and thus became a part of the Kali'nago regional struggle against European colonisation. Attacks on the Courlanders reflected the importance of Tobago within Kali'nago networks as well as the unattractiveness of Courland as an ally. The study of Shafie et al. shows Tobago and the Courlanders to be of negligible centrality to Kali'nago raiding. This illustrates the vastness of the Kali'nago sphere of activity but also reflects the fact that the study only recorded one instance of Kali'nago violence against the Courlanders; an early attack on the colony from the 1650s.[62] If raids from the later period were shown, Courland would feature far more prominently as an enemy of Kali'nago influence islands.

Many historians have described Jakob's policy towards the indigenous peoples of Tobago as ill-informed. For example, Jakovļeva pointed out the unwillingness of Kali'na people to plant within the Couronian community.[63] Mattiesen observed 'Because of the warlike, workshy nature of the Indian-Caribbean hunter race, bartering was hardly an option in Tobago. And it was a big mistake and a waste for the duke to keep sending goods for "commerce" to Tobago and did not recognise the true idiosyncrasies of his colony'.[64] This remark is itself reductive as Mattiesen himself did not understand the way in which the Kali'nago functioned. However, he was correct to suggest that the dukes were also ignorant. The Courlanders had little to offer to compensate the disruption that they were causing to native trading networks. Furthermore, it does not seem that the Couronian colonial planners were willing to consider their relations with the indigenous people very deeply. The plans drawn up by the Courlanders in association with the Brandenburgers and then the merchants of Rotterdam, did not reference the indigenous people at all, which is surprising given how detrimental they had been to

[61] Boomert, 'Amerindian- European Encounters', (p. 142).
[62] Shafie, et al., 'Hypergraph Representations'.
[63] Jakovļeva, 'Jauns Avots', (p. 58).
[64] 'Wegen der kriegischen arbeitscheren Wesenart des indianisch-karibischen Jägervolkers kam ein Tauschhandel in Tobago kaum in Frage. Und es war ein großer Fehler und eine Wertergeudung des Herzogs, wenn er immer wieder Waren zum ,,Commercien'' nach Tobago sandte, und die wahre Eigenart seiner Kolonie lange nicht erkannte.' Mattiesen, *Kolonial und Überseepolitik*, p. 474.

previous efforts. Poyntz only referenced Amerindians in the second of his published pamphlets and when he did so, he proved himself to be unrealistic, claiming, for instance to be acquainted with the Trinidadian 'king'.[65] Descriptions such as his seem more keen to discuss flora and fauna, rather than any potential interactions with the human residents of the island.

The Couronian attitude to indigenous people was not one of respect, but one of arrogance and ignorance. In colonial plans these people were considered as an afterthought who could be pacified with a moderate trade and the honour of working on a European plantation. The Duke of Courland considered the inhabitants of Tobago as his subjects. The treaty of 1664 with Charles II declared that 'all lands, havens, creeks, rivers and profits', belonged to Courland.[66] The extent of the respect which the native inhabitants were afforded was as people under the yoke of Mitau, rather than people with their own interests and backgrounds. Thus, the Couronian response to them was unnuanced and assured of the supremacy of European ways of life.

The River Gambia as an Indigenous Space

Whilst European activity in the Caribbean turned the regional economy on its head, the experience in Africa was more closely subject to indigenous trading and political structures. The River Gambia was an important zone for African commerce. Here many cultures mixed to do business with each other and was, in Philip Curtin's words, 'a confluence of maritime and desert'.[67] It was from the desert that the area's main religion, Islam, had been introduced, although pagan beliefs such as ancestor worship still pervaded.[68] The importance of ancestors in religion reflected the prominence of kinship ties in society. This form of identification preponderated ethnic affiliations and could be held across villages, polities, and families.[69] Effective lineage constrained itself mostly to the village and manifested as a political unit, whereby the oldest male assumed administrative predominance, reporting the interests of the village to royal officials.

Occupational ties also proved stronger links than ethnic solidarities. This was particularly true of the northern bank of the Gambia which operated a broad caste system. Among these were freemen, slaves, and artisanal professionals. The categorisation of freeman could range from a king (*mansa*) to an unobligated peasant. Slaves were predominantly captured in war. In contrast to European plantation slaves, Senegambian slaves were not typically considered property. Slaves born in captivity were inalienable to the household and owed it a portion of labour. In return the head of the family would house them and provide them with a marital partner. Slaves could be farmers, craftspeople, or

[65] Poyntz, *The Present Prospect* (1695), p. 49.
[66] Treaty between Duke Jakob and Charles II, 17 November 1664, LVVA: 554, apr. 3, l. 6, fols. 81-83; Mattiesen, *Kolonial und Überseepolitik*, p. 601.
[67] Curtin, *Economic Change*, p. 3.
[68] Ibid., pp. 47-48.
[69] Ibid., pp. 30-31.

concubines; royal slaves were tasked with bureaucratic duties. In the eighteenth century it was believed that three quarters of Senegambians were slaves. The occupational caste also covered a range of people, including smiths, leatherworkers, woodworkers, and musicians. The caste system only pertained to the northern riverbank. In the south there was no such caste structure. Generally, both sides of the river shared a tradition of matrilineal inheritance which favoured brothers rather than older sons. These societal facets were in the process of erosion through the influence of Islam.[70]

In Senegambia there were four main ethnicities: Mandingo (Mandinka), Jollof (Wolof), Fula, and Jola.[71] Politically, the kingdoms of the Gambia took on an ethnic identity depending on the ethnicity of the clans from which the *mansas* were chosen. Fooni and Kombo were Jola kingdoms whilst Barra (Niumi), Badibu, Niami, and Wuuli were Mandingo dominated. The Jollof predominated in Bar Salun and typically originated from the northern areas towards the Senegal River.[72] Jollof farmers often prioritised agrarian farming as the land in the Senegal was more fertile than on the Gambia. The lack of fresh water at the Gambia diminished the importance of land in most other Gambian societies, where political power was based around the amount of people one could control.[73] Land was not privately owned.

The banks of the River Gambia were split into several small kingdoms. The southern bank was nominally under control of the Kaabu Empire, although the *mansas* enjoyed significant autonomy. Many of the Gambian kingdoms wielded only limited power over a few villages and the trade that took place there.[74] However, the coastal kingdoms of Barra and Kombo, who connected Saharan, river, coastal, and European trade, were able to accumulate wealth. Barra was arguably the most influential power in the region, and it was this kingdom which collected tolls on the River Gambia.

Trading was widespread in the Senegambian area. Most settlements had a marketplace where locals and foreigners could exchange their goods. Brikama in Kombo has been considered as one of the biggest near the Atlantic coast.[75] Trading activity would typically travel along the river but would continue on land when the Gambia became difficult to navigate at Kassan. From here trade moved over well-established routes into Mali and across the Sahara. The primary resource available to coastal Gambian merchants before substantial European contact was tidal salt. This was traded in

[70] Ibid., pp. 30-36.
[71] Southorn, *The Gambia*, p. 38.
[72] Ibid., p. 39.
[73] Mancke, 'Polity Formation', (p. 387).
[74] Curtin, *Economic Change*, p. 41.
[75] David P. Gamble, 'The South Bank of the Gambia: Places People and Population: The Kombo Districts' Names on Maps and in Travellers' Accounts up to 1825' in *Gambian Studies* 51 D (2006) Revised, p. 105.

Mali for textiles. Due to the scattered production of iron working, trade was also important to this industry.[76]

Trading diasporas were a vital part of the Senegambian commerce. Diasporas helped to bridge the cultural gap between traders in the west and commercial networks of the east. Sharing language, customs, and kinship was important in Senegambian societies and thus eastern traders were required to partially settle in order to become brokers. Senegambian rulers often tolerated these diasporas for the revenues they provided and the prestige of their Muslim cultures but did not wish them to assimilate due to their value as partial outsiders.[77] The identity of these diasporas was associated with the East and Islam. Europeans often referred to the eastern Gambia as 'merchant's country'.[78] Senegambian merchants sometimes converted to Islam as this was seen as a way to facilitate trade with Muslim diasporas.[79] Islam was a core characteristic of the Soninke diaspora, which connected Niger, and the Mandinka Mari which carried salt to Mali.[80] These diasporas, in turn would adopt Mandingo language and customs in order to win more trust. A very prominent group in the Gambia region, hailing from the East, were the Juula. Meaning 'merchant' in Mandingo, this group toured Senegambian marketplaces with goods from the sub-Saharan trading network. The Juula were frequently mentioned in European sources as the merchants offering the broadest variety of products. They were also respected as neutrals in regional conflicts.[81] Richard Jobson, an English traveller of the 1620s, remarked that merchants were often permitted to operate regardless of conflict, in contrast to the European habit of mixing trade and war.[82]

European Interactions on the River Gambia

European traders were often treated as another diasporic community within Senegambian commerce. Consequently, European merchants were restricted to the edges of communities in fortresses and factories, at the discretion of local rulers. The *mansas* used the opportunity to increase their access to new foreign goods, such as crystals, amber, brandy, and European weaponry. In Barra's case, there was also a chance to reap the benefits of increased toll revenue, charging for transit, water collection, and rent. The Mansa of Barra was the landlord for the French factory at Albreda, the many European factories at Juffure, and St Andreas Island. Barra therefore found it very beneficial to welcome European arrivals but would soon assert authority if its conditions were ignored. On 5 January 1659, Barra massacred a Dutch party on Dog Island, taking 80,000 guilders worth of goods. The Mansa of

[76] Curtin, *Economic Change*, p. 28 and 210.
[77] Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge: New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 28 and 46.
[78] Curtin, *Economic Change*, p. 81.
[79] Ibid., p. 48.
[80] Ibid., p. 69.
[81] Ibid., p. 121.
[82] Ibid., p. 67.

Barra's brother was accused of leading the attack.[83] The indigenous kingdoms could also become antagonistic if persuaded to do so by European powers, acting on the impulses of their rivalries. For instance, Barra's attack on the English at Charles Island in 1661, was influenced by the Dutch factor and some Portuguese merchants offering the *mansa* gifts of brandy and linen.[84]

For the most part the interests of African polities did not concern themselves with European competition and rival European groups were often tolerated alongside each other; for instance, the French in Albreda and the British in neighbouring Juffure. Although the Groningen chamber and the English crown acted as though they could set a monopoly, this was not feasible in seventeenth century Gambia. Indigenous control of the hinterland and European unfamiliarity with the region, placed the power in the hands of African rulers. Consequently, Europeans were required to treat African rulers and traders with reverence. Thus, after the problems the WIC experienced settling Dog Island and St Andreas Island, Robert Holmes prioritised negotiating with the 'King of Juffure' and with Kombo, whom he, as reported in his own account, 'caressed and entertained very civilly to gain their friendship to our people and interest'.[85]

European arrivals, hoping to fit into the commercial scene in Senegambia were at a disadvantage to more established African traders. Europeans lacked the kinship networks in Africa that were so important in Senegambian social structures. They also did not possess the confessional advantages of Islam which proved popular among merchant circles on the Gambia. Islam prohibited the use of loans or interest, a common feature in European commerce.[86] The differences in religion sometimes caused distrust. Prince Ruprecht showed his reluctance to hire local soldiers to capture Commonwealth vessels as he objected to 'infidels shedding Christian blood'.[87]

Fortunately for northern European traders, the Portuguese had arrived two centuries before them. There were consequently strong Portuguese networks of trade and knowledge existing in Senegambia by the seventeenth century. Initially the Portuguese had captured people who would act as interpreters in commercial and diplomatic situations.[88] Eventually however, learning European languages was seen as an opportunity for prosperity for many Senegambians, especially as the Europeans seemed so reluctant to learn any African languages themselves. Short-term contracts and death from disease often prevented Europeans from staying long enough to become specialists in African languages and cultures. The intermarriage of Portuguese settlers and Gambians created a Luso-African diaspora

[83] Letters reacting to the attack of Barra on Dog Island, 1659, Royal Collection of the Netherlands, The Hague, no: A25-326.
[84] Account of Stephen Ustick on the events of 1661 on the River Gambia, 7 July 1664, TNA: CO 1/18, 69, fols. 156-157.
[85] Gray, *A History of the Gambia*, p. 36; Southorn, *The Gambia*, p. 83.
[86] Curtin, *Economic Change*, p. 303.
[87] Ruprecht von der Pfalz, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert*, p. 360.
[88] David Northrup, *Africa's Discovery of Europe: 1450-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 60

which entrenched themselves as mediators between Europeans and Senegambians. The members of the diaspora could often accumulate significant wealth through this service.[89] Like the Juula and the Mandinka Mari, the Luso-Africans adopted Jollof and Mandingo customs and language. However, many wore European-style clothing and claimed to be Christians, making them more palatable to their extra-continental trading partners.[90] The involvement of individuals of Portuguese heritage was common in the European fortresses even if they were not necessarily Luso-Africans, for example Pedro Justo Baque of the WIC and Courland's Maghellas.

Political figures also recognised the value of communicating with Europeans. Kings in Western Africa were known to speak European languages. The King of Benin greeted a group of bemused English explorers on first contact in 1553 by using Portuguese, whilst one of his successors in 1682 even knew German.[91] Mansas on the Gambia would often possess enslaved officials called *Tubabmansa* or the 'King of the Europeans' whose job was to converse with visitors from Europe.[92]

Europeans attempted, largely unsuccessfully, to modify Senegambian trading trends. The most popular European import was the iron bar, constituting 24.9% of European sales in the 1680s.[93] Iron bars were typically sourced from the Rhine/ Maas region of Europe. By the 1660s, iron bars sold on the Gambia had been standardised with those typically made on the Rhine, being twenty-three centimetres long, two fingers of width at one end and three at the other.[94] Prices for other goods, both imported and exported, were calculated using the iron bar as a measure. Typically, one iron bar would equate to six English shillings or two reichsthalers.[95]

The initial motivation for Portuguese and English interest in the area had been gold. The English claimed to have found gold in 1651, however, Europeans never controlled gold mining during this period. The Juula had the most gold to offer willing buyers and partially reoriented their gold trade from the Sahara to the Atlantic coast in order to do so.[96] Yet, the trade itself was of little worth in Senegambia. The gold regions were politically fragmented and accumulating it required intensive work. On a normal day, one person would only discover 2.25 to 2.5 g of typically low-quality gold.[97] Although, 1.772 g of gold was worth one iron bar in 1680, the commodity was too expensive for Europeans to export and, in a prosperous year, only 35 kg of it was.[98]

[89] Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade*, pp. 57-58.
[90] Curtin, *Economic Change*, p. 96.
[91] Northrup, *Africa's Discovery*, p. 60.
[92] Curtin, *Economic Change*, p. 46.
[93] Ibid., p. 249.
[94] Ibid., p. 241.
[95] Ibid., p. 254.
[96] Northrup, *Africa's Discovery*, p. 44.
[97] Curtin, *Economic Change*, p. 205.
[98] Ibid., p. 202 and 247.

The other aim of the Europeans was to cultivate a slave trade to cater for overseas plantations. The slave trade had a profound effect on the Senegambian region. The area was the most frequent place of origin for slaves in the early seventeenth century, but was soon displaced by Kongo, Angola, and the Gold Coast.[99] Between 1681 and 1690 the average annual export of slaves was around 1,200, sometimes dropping as low as 750 in 1687 and 500 in 1693.[100] This was significantly lower than the number of slaves exchanged at the heigh of the trade in the eighteenth century. Adult slaves on the Gambia typically cost thirty iron bars in the 1680s whilst children cost twenty bars.[101] Prices dipped in times of war when more slaves were being captured but there is little indication that the slave trade encouraged more war than usual, as in the Ashanti Empire or the Kingdom of Dahomey. It should be noted that indigenous populations already consisted mostly of slaves who had been captured in war. European interest in slavery would have diminished the number of slaves which were being taken into indigenous communities. The Juula, with their influence in the hinterland, were the main indigenous slavers. Initially slaves were found mostly amongst the Bassari people in the Tenda ethnic group who lived at the south-eastern extent of the Gambia, but they were found to become sick near to the sea. Thus, by the 1680s, many of those condemned to slavery overseas were from the Bambara regions between the Senegal and Niger rivers in modern-day Mali.[102]

Although not as significant as the three commodities mentioned above, the Gambia was also open to further commodities. Prince Ruprecht remarked that he was able to trade 'elephant's teeth [ivory], wax, hides […] coral, crystal, amber, beads, blue cotton cloth, mamillos of brass and strong liquors.'[103] The trade of hides and textiles was a particular change. Whilst the hides and cotton were available, production of cloth was not widespread and limited mostly to the Senegalese polity of Bundu.[104] The Europeans brought an influx of manufactured cloth from England and Silesia, some of which had been designed to African tastes.[105] Europeans were often able to make a good profit from cheap African materials. A hide or indigenous country cloth cost one quarter of a bar, whilst Silesian linen cost three bars. Curtin has therefore surmised that the cloth trade was more important than the gold trade for the Europeans.[106]

[99] Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, p. 125.
[100] Curtin, *Economic Change*, p. 162.
[101] Ibid., p. 247.
[102] Ibid., p. 165 and 178; Stephan Bühnen, 'Ethnic Origins of Peruvian Slaves (1548-1650): Figures for Upper Guinea' in *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde* 38 (1993), 57-110, (p. 96). Curtin refers to the Tenda as 'the Tanda'.
[103] Ruprecht von der Pfalz, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert*, p. 361.
[104] Curtin, *Economic Change*, pp. 212-213.
[105] Northrup, *Africa's Discovery*, p. 83.
[106] Curtin, *Economic Change*, p. 242.

Courland and the River Gambia

Couronian representatives recognised that a close dialogue with the indigenous people of the Gambia was of vital importance, mirroring their diplomatic approach to European trading agreements. The kingdoms and merchants of the Gambia had systems in place for dealing with foreign traders and so the Courlanders could not inflate their agency in the region as they had done in Tobago. The only opportunity available to the Courlanders here was as a trading post under African supervision.

Schulte's log offers an insightful glimpse into daily interaction with indigenous people. The Couronian expedition approved of St Andreas Island as a potential site for fortification on 26 October 1651. The next day Schulte visited Bintang to 'win friendship from the inhabitants' there. Amicability was crucial in Africa if the Courlanders were to obtain anything at all from the Gambia. Bintang contained a marketplace but was also an outpost for Portuguese traders who were able to orientate the new arrivals. The visit to Bintang filled the time it took to gain an audience with the Mansa of Barra. This was obtained on 28 October along with a license to build a base on St Andreas for an undisclosed rent.

Work began on the fort two days later and, whilst it was being built, the colonists corresponded with other African rulers. Schulte mentions a figure called Louis Perdegons who corresponded with African leaders and traders. On 31 October, Perdegons was sent to 'Ambosut' in Kombo, to offer brandy to the king there.[107] It is possible that Perdegons was permanently living in the area and may have had African heritage himself. On 2 November, noblemen from Barra arrived to inspect the Courlanders' progress and found themselves concerned. The men protested that they had not known that Schulte had intended to build a substantial fortification. Construction was then halted for two days in which the Courlanders were obliged to pay a tax and buy six Africans 'who were completely unusable' for the price of thirty iron bars.[108] The powerholders in Barra presumably had not expected that traders would act militarily to defend that activity. Without the payment of tribute, such practices would have been seen as a threat. It is interesting that Schulte felt forced to buy workers to help him build his fort and it is possible that these slaves were used by Barra to keep an eye on how the fort developed.

The fortress was the foremost erection on St Andreas Island. A warehouse was only constructed in the new year. Before that time, the goods bought by the Courlanders were focused upon subsistence. The stronghold regularly bought beans and livestock as well as rice. Historians of Courland are sometimes surprised that the colony desired rice. Mattiesen imagined that Schulte's diary referred to maize, an American crop brought to Africa in the sixteenth century.[109] Anderson imagined that the colonists

[107] 'um mit den Einwohnern Freunschaft zu bekommen'. Mattiesen, 'Ein Tagebuch', (p. 197).
[108] 'die ganz unbrauchbar waren'. Ibid.
[109] Ibid., (p. 211).

were being ignorant when they presumed that rice would offer a substantial part of the diet in Africa.[110] In fact, African rice is native to the Senegambian region and, although not as high-yielding as Asian rice, had been staple thousands of years prior to the European arrival.[111] Goods were sourced from a range of local markets in different kingdoms. For instance, the Couronians found useful goods in Jokadu, a region to the east of Barra. Schulte, Jansen, and Deniger also travelled beyond Elephant Island, where the river narrows roughly 115 km east of St Andreas, to trade in Duma Sansang in the Kingdom of Jarra. The most frequently visited markets proved to be Bintang and Berefet, directly south of St Andreas in Kombo.[112] This period was also used to become familiar with the surrounding merchants. For instance, Schulte noted that it was common practice for the English to buy their slaves from Kombo.[113]

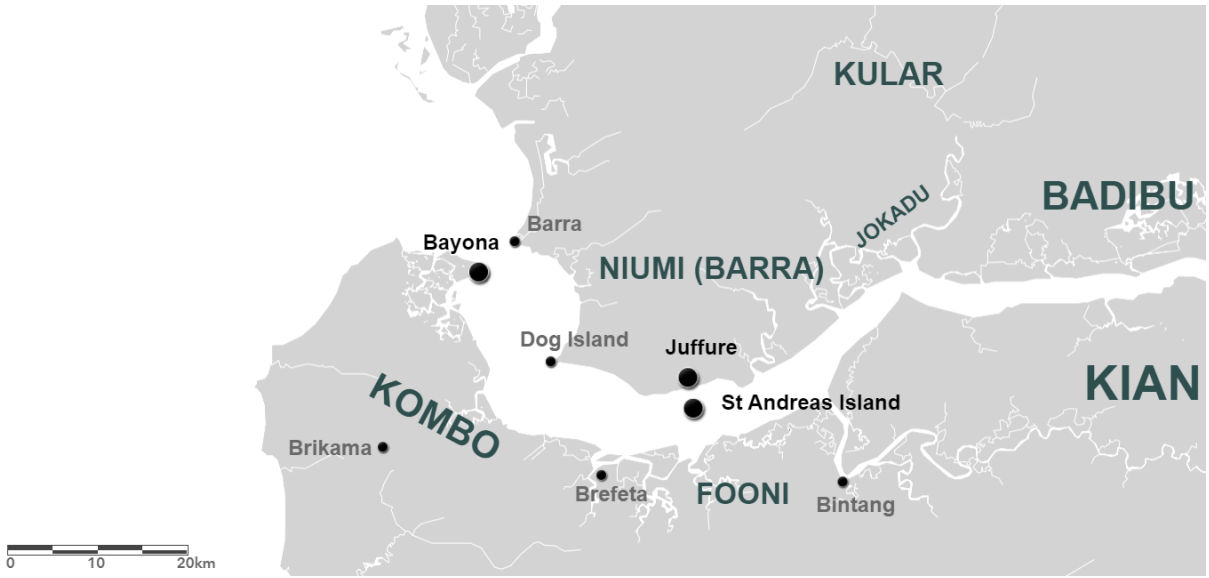


Figure 27: The Kingdoms of Senegmabia

The principle aim of the Courlanders was to trade. The earliest goods sent to Africa with Mollens and Schulte in 1651 were very varied and do not seem to have been high quality. They included paper, tinware, copperware, coarse cloth, glass bottles, and 'several types of mercury'.[114] The goods appear to have been selected haphazardly and speculatively. Compare this to the voyage of Pieter Feiches Eickemahr in 1668, which prioritised the trade of fabrics- Krakow linen, woollen cloth, and canvas- which were proving popular in the Gambia at the time. The load also included 300 reichsthalers'

[110] Anderson, 'Die Kurländische Kolonie Tobago', (p. 144).
[111] National Research Council, *Lost Crops of Africa: Volume I: Grains* (Washington D.C.: National Academies Press, 1996).
[112] Mattiesen, 'Ein Tagebuch'.
[113] Ibid., p. 198.
[114] 'Crammerie adschillige slaugs'. Sound Toll Registers Online. *www.soundtoll.nl.*

worth of trading goods, drawing on the usefulness of composite lots in Senegambian exchange.[115] It is possible that Couronian goods trade adapted over time the more that was learned about the local market. In line with African consumption and trading practices, iron was always present on Couronian ships heading to Africa. The Couronian expeditions to Africa coincided with a significant upturn in the production of iron in Courland as well as frequent visits of ducal ships to Flekkerøy.[116]

The items bought with these goods are found in the Sound Toll records and occasionally within the duke's ship accounts. Three ships are mentioned as arriving from Gambia or 'Guinea' in the Sound Toll records. Schulte returned to Courland with ten ship pounds of wax in 1652 whilst Jørgen Johansen arrived with thirty. Johansen also carried various skins whilst Mollens possessed 126,000 pounds of the spice aframonum melegueta. However, the most popular good was ivory. All three ships carried it, Schulte's with 300 pounds, Johanssen's with 3,000 pounds, and Mollens' with 5,000 pounds.[117] Couronian demand for ivory implies a regular interaction with the Juula who were most known for selling it in the Senegambia region. The Courlanders seemed very interested in the Senegambian hinterland the Juula inhabited. The chart in the ducal archives, written in Portuguese and mappping the River Niger deep into the African interior seems to show an interest in the wider Western African economy, although it is not clear what the purpose of the map was.[118]

The recruitment of Lutheran pastors was another sign that the duke wanted to learn more about the people with whom he traded. First Gottschalk Ebeling and then Joachim Dannenfeldt were sent to accompany the African expeditions. In 1654, Dannenfeldt was issued with instructions to 'learn the language of the blacks' in order 'to bring the pagan souls to the correct knowledge of God'.[119] The pair were thus the first Lutheran missionaries ever sent to Africa. The attempted conversion of local people was not necessarily a tactic of domination, and such a strategy would have been unrealistic. Indeed, Jakob was keen for his pastors not to provoke annoyance, writing 'with the Blacks as well as with the Christians of different religions see that there is no vexation or bitterness.'[120] The policy echoed near-contemporaneous Dutch instructions to São Tomé in which governors were asked to 'allow the inhabitants to exercise their own religion on condition that they practise this within the walls of their churches and monasteries, situated beyond the view of our fortifications' although this may also have covered Portuguese Catholics too.[121] In the opinion of Henning Uber, the Couronian approach was an attempt to facilitate trading relations and perhaps foster a religious diaspora which

[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Map of colonial property of the Duke of Courland, undated, LVVA: 554, apr. 2, l. 3179.
[119] 'die Sprache der Schwartzen' and 'die heydnischen Gemüthes zur rechten Erkenntniß Gottes'. Uber, 'Die Religionspolitik Herzog Jakobs', (p.186).
[120] Ibid.
[121] Adam Jones (ed.), *West Africa in the Mid-Seventeenth Century: An Anonymous Dutch Manuscript* trans. Adam Jones (Atlanta, GA: African Studies Association Press, 1995), p. 69.

would have been more palatable than pagans or Muslims.[122] A trading sphere with some Lutheran influence may have been considered easier to penetrate than one with a significantly Islamic character.

It seems that the Courlanders were considered good tenants in Barra and Kombo. The Courlanders did not suffer the attacks inflicted on the Dutch, presumably because their tribute was accepted and paid regularly. Both Barra and Kombo expressed resistance to the takeover of St Andreas Island by the Amsterdam WIC, and several Dutch settlers were taken hostage in Juffure. Some writers, like Southorn, have regarded this resistance with surprise. In fact, it is no surprise at all. Having already expelled the Dutch from Dog Island, presumably for not respecting the *mansa's* right to tribute, Barra then found that the WIC had taken over its territory through a deal made in Europe, without its involvement.[123] In this period, indigenous polities possessed control over who could trade and settle within their territories. Support for Courland was an exercise of that right. Robert Holmes did not make the same mistake and supported his monopoly granted in London with negotiations in both Kombo and Barra. At this point the African kingdoms abandoned their support for Courland which again is no shock; Stiel's fortress contained only seven inhabitants and was probably unable to pay much rent.

Holmes' takeover marked the end of Courland's presence on the Gambia, although not for lack of trying. Jakob's chosen method of recovering his African trade was to appeal to European rulers. Yet Jakob did not forget the African *mansas* who had accommodated him in 1651. The duke wrote letters to Kombo in 1675, 1680, and 1681 in Latin. In the first letter, the duke informed the *mansa* that a ship would be sent soon. He reminded his African counterpart of Courland and Kombo's former friendship and hoped that the arrivals would be given a good price for slaves. In the letter of 1680, Jakob noted the previous *mansa's* death and gave his condolences to the new *mansa*, whom he again petitioned for hospitality towards Couronian ships.[124] Jakob treated the Mansa of Kombo with considerable respect. The use of Latin and the moniker 'most serene king' reflects that esteem. Here we see that Jakob recognised the power the *mansas* possessed in their local trade and noted the importance Kombo held in the slave trade.

It is worth remarking that despite the reverence, Jakob only wrote his letters to Kombo after first trying and failing to gain concessions from the Gambia in Europe. Nevertheless, the duke clearly had a news source in Africa for him to know that the Mansa of Kombo had recently died, information which was probably relayed to him via his representatives in Amsterdam or London. Although a symbol of Jakob's desperation, the letters illustrate the importance of obtaining information on

[122] Uber, 'Die Religionspolitik Herzog Jakobs', (p.186).
[123] Southorn, *The Gambia*, p. 80.
[124] Gray, A History of the Gambia, p. 47; Copy of a letter from Duke Jakob to the Mansa of Kombo, 13 February 1680, LVVA: 554, apr. 3, l. 449, fols. 27v.-28.

indigenous politics. The *mansas* of the Gambia judged who obtained trade in their lands and Courland's experiences and behaviour reflected that fact. Couronian policy centred on amity with African rulers, implying that they knew the basics of how Senegambian trade functioned.

Courland and the Slave Trade

Like any typical European colonial traders in the Atlantic, the dukes of Courland attempted to involve themselves in the slave trade. Slavery was deemed essential to the upkeep of the plantation economy the dukes wished to implement on Tobago, and the strategy for penetrating other colonial markets. Cruse lamented, '[u]nfortunately slaves were the main article of trade in [all] countries and the duke did not raise himself above the spirit of the age which considered it neither original nor inhumane.'[125] Historians engaged in the comparative history of the slave trade have described Courland's role as insignificant. Pieter Emmer included Courland in his investigation of the 'smaller' slave trading powers, which also incorporated Sweden, Brandenburg-Prussia, Denmark, and the United Provinces, the last of which shipped over 550,000 slaves between 1570 and 1850.[126] When referring to Courland, Emmer dismissed the role of ducal shipping completely, writing, 'it is doubtful, however, that any Kurland slave ships ever crossed the Atlantic'.[127] Andrea Weindl also downplayed Courland's role surmising that 'it is unlikely that any slave voyages between Gambia and Tobago occurred'.[128] A comparison of Baltic colonial powers shows the diminutive size of the Couronian impact on the slave trade. Denmark shipped an estimated 68,391 Africans and between 1641 and the beginning of the 1800s, Brandenburg-Prussia transported 25,169 people. In comparison the Couronian effect was so slight that David Eltis and David Richardson combined the Couronain statistics with the Swedish figures: a total of 2,239 slaves.[129]

Such low estimates are not surprising. The time in which Couronians pursued colonial trade was very short; the duke only possessed a permanent base in Africa for seven years. Archival examinations also point to a small slaving operation, as very little material exists attesting to the Couronain slave trade. There does not seem to be any systematic accounting record from Africa, counting the number of people who were bought and sold by Couronian slaving ships, unlike the very comprehensive documentation available from English-controlled James Island.[130]

[125] 'Leider waren damals Sclaven der Hauptartickel des Handels in [jeden] Ländern, und der Herzog erhob sich dann nicht über den Geist aus Zutalters, das diesen Handel weder für unschriftlich, noch für unmenschlich hielt'. Cruse, *Curland unter den Herzögen*, p. 147.
[126] Emmer, 'Slavery and the Slave Trade'; Slave Voyages, *www.slavevoyages.org*.
[127] Emmer, 'Slavery and the Slave Trade', (p. 472).
[128] Weindl, 'The Slave Trade', (p. 251).
[129] David Eltis and David Richardson, 'A New Assessment of the Transatlantic Slave Trade' in *Extending the Frontiers*, eds. Eltis and Richardson, 1-60, (p. 34).
[130] Journal for James Island, January 1664, TNA: T 70/544.

Eltis and Richardson derive their statistics from the slave voyage database. The information on the database is under constant review and much work has been done to provide the most complete view of Atlantic slaving activity. Nevertheless, there are only two ships associated with the dukes present on the database. Both instances are somewhat perplexing to the scholar of Courland as the reports are inconsistent with further sources.

The only ship registered under the Couronian flag was named the '*Madama*' which, the database tells us, was guided by Captain William Mullins from the Couronian coastline to Tobago via Ardra and Accra.[131] Ardra, where the ship took on slaves, refers to the Kingdom of Ardra where the prominent slaving market of Allada was situated, now in modern-day Benin. The source comments that 145 slaves embarked, 109 of whom arrived in Tobago. William Mullins is clearly an English spelling of Willem Mollens. The dates of the voyage, starting on 1 June 1658, trading for slaves in February 1659, and disembarking in 1660, indicates that this was Mollens' final trip to the Caribbean for Courland. The dates coincide with Mollens' detainment at Elmina in February 1659, west of Accra. Mollens' response to Governor Ruijghaver's actions indicated that Mollens was about to trade in Calabar as opposed to Allada, although his plans may have altered since this confrontation.[132] Another inconsistency is that the source believed Mollens arrived in Tobago when in fact he diverted to Jamaica. The *Madama* is clearly a reference to the Couronian vessel *Dame*. Mollens was actually travelling in *Cavalier* at the time, although *Dame* was accompanying it.[133]

The report of the other Couronian ship in the database originates from the Cape Verde Islands, under Portuguese control, in 1652.[134] The unnamed ship collected 179 slaves from the River Gambia, 158 of whom disembarked in an unknown location. Oddly, the source indicated the owner to be the Duke of Courland, but the flag to be British. There is a slim chance that the observers may have been confused by the debacle in which Pieter Schulte navigated Prince Ruprecht's boats through the Gambia, which occurred in 1652. This is unlikely however as Ruprecht's ships did not leave the region with slaves.[135] Potentially, this ship was *Walfisch* which was also captained by Willem Mollens. As the Courlanders were new in Africa, the source may have dismissed the notion that the ship travelled under a Couronian flag. Mollens' English heritage may have persuaded any observers that the ship was itself English. This explanation is tenuous and so the identity of this ship is still mysterious. If the ship was the *Walfisch*, it did not disembark its slaves in the Caribbean as it had returned to the Baltic by August 1652.

[131] Slave Voyages, *www.slavevoyages.org*.
[132] Note from Willem Mollens to the fort of Elmina, 4 February 1658, NL-HaNA, Kust van Guinea, 1.05.14, inv.nr. 81, fols. 60-62.
[133] Anderson, 'The Couronians and the West Indies', (p. 271).
[134] Slave Voyages, *www.slavevoyages.org*.
[135] Ruprecht von der Pfalz, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert.*

Although the slave voyage database has experienced several major reviews, the Couronian contribution it is not complete. At least six further slaving ships can be added to the list. According to Mattiesen, the earliest of these additional journeys was the voyage undertaken by Willem Mollens Senior in 1652, who captained *Das Wappen der Herzogin* on behalf of the Portuguese between Guinea and Brazil, carrying slaves.[136] This is another candidate for the ship spotted at Cape Verde, but it does not seem plausible for a Portuguese settlement to misidentify its own ship. The next ship to be added is the *Leopard*, reported in the Thurloe Papers, which set sail in April 1653, under Claes Fredericksen.[137] The ship, although encountering numerous disasters on its journey did at least successfully trade slaves. The Couronian vessel had given away copper bars in 'Guinea' to secure the transactions and, as a Couronian outpost in the Caribbean was yet to exist, shipped the slaves to Guadeloupe for sale.[138]

Also omitted are the voyages undertaken by *Isländer* from 10 June 1656 and 8 October 1657 which delivered slaves to the Caribbean from an unknown source in Africa. This journey was followed by Andries Crava's failed attempt to supply Buenos Aires with 100 slaves in 1659. The vessel travelled from Sierra Leone but was halted by Elmina.[139] We also have evidence of Couronian slaving trips continuing after the African outpost had been conceded. *Möwe* had initially aimed to deliver slaves for Tobago when it was diverted to Martinique in 1672.[140] Weindl cites a ship under the Couronian flag named *Sereine* travelling from Amsterdam to Gorée and then on to Guadeloupe in 1683, carrying slaves.[141] The captain of the *Sereine* was Cornel Gilde. In October 1683, a Cornelis Gilde arrived in Tobago on *Esperance* carrying supplies for Monck's colonists. This appears to be a different incident as the *Esperance* was not carrying slaves at the time of its journey.[142]

Even if evidence of Courland slaving ventures is sparse, we certainly know that the Couronians intended to partake in a substantial slave trading venture. The duke intended to imitate the WIC, as the Danes did later, in providing slaves for other colonial powers. The majority of examples we have for Couronian slaving, headed to foreign islands. By accident or design, three ships arrived on French islands, at least one voyage in Portuguese Brazil and one, the *Pietas*, intended to sell its slaves in Spanish imperial territory. The offer to deliver slaves to the Spanish Americas was on the table from 1652 when Nicholas de Bye offered 1,000 slaves in exchange for a guarantee of ship safety from

[136] Mattiesen, *Kolonial- und Überseepolitik,* p. 99.
[137] 'State Papers, 1655: April (5 of 6),'.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Instructions for the officers of the ship *Pietas,* 30 April 1659, NL-HaNA, 1.01.02 Staten Generaal, inv.nr. 5767, scan 90; Report on the hijack of the Pietas, 23 March 1661, NL-SAA: 5075-119, inv. nr. 2717A, fols. 297-297v. Notary: Vincent Swanenburgh.
[140] Andersons, *Senie Kurzemnieki Amerikā*, p. 271.
[141] Weindl, 'The Slave Trade', (p. 251).
[142] Andersons, *Senie Kurzemnieki Amerikā*, p. 252-253.

Spanish aggression.[143] Providing such a service to Spain, if the Courlanders were able to achieve it, would have increased the Couronian role in the slave trade significantly.

There was also an expectation that slave labour would be a vital part of Courland's activity on Tobago. Poyntz promised 'Servants, Negroes, Land and all things necessary' to potential English colonists on the island. A good first year, he claimed, would see a landowner accrue the means to purchase seven or eight slaves. Poyntz claimed that these labourers could be obtained at twenty-five pounds per person, fifteen in peace time.[144] According to Matthias Beck, slaves were available to all.[145] In 1670, Duke Jakob envisioned that slaves would be used to clear forest land for planting. After this task had been achieved, he would allow slaves to be bought by planters on credit, to help them produce the most out of their private land.[146] Given that Courland's low population were already exploited on domestic fields, the use of slaves was likely seen as doubly imperative. Courland did not have the surplus and supposedly idle population to sustain a colony of indentured servants, as was initially the case in the British Isles.

Courland and Brandenburg-Prussia's plan to divide Tobago between themselves had slavery at its heart. Brandenburg expected that Courland might contribute sixty slaves a year at a price of eighty reichsthaler per head. This was to be supplemented by the allowance of foreign deliveries of slaves at sixty or seventy reichsthalers per slave, so that foreigners did not undermine Courland's own slaving ventures.[147] These proposals depended on the Courlanders being able to obtain slaves from the English at St Andreas or James Island as it was named by then.

When the Courlanders held a fort in Africa, slaving activities had not just been confined to the single island the duke possessed. Courlanders obtained slaves from various places in Western Africa. Most slaves on the Gambia were likely to have been obtained from the Juula who brought captured peoples from the hinterland. Curtin calculated, based on the value of goods given by the English for slaves in 1664, that the average slave would cost around three and a half pounds (or twelve reichsthalers), rising to seven in the 1680s (around thirty reichsthalers).[148]

Apart from the fort in the Gambia, Courlanders operated from Nicholaes Groenewout's outpost at the mouth of the Sierra Leone, established in January 1655. We cannot be sure how much trading traffic the outpost received, however, Andries Crava attempted to trade there in 1659.[149] From Mollens'

[143] Ibid., p. 106: Mattiesen, *Kolonial und Überseepolitik*, p. 70.
[144] Poyntz, *The Present Prospect* (1683), p. 41.
[145] Anderson, 'Die Kurländische Kolonie Tobago', (p. 133).
[146] Proposed contract between Brandenburg and Courland about Tobago, undated, GStA PK: I. HA Rep.9 Polen nr.7 e 1, fol. 51v.
[147] Ibid., fols. 54-54v.
[148] Curtin, *Economic Change*, p. 158.
[149] Instructions for the officers of the ship *Pietas,* 30 April 1659, NL-HaNA, 1.01.02 Staten Generaal, inv.nr. 5767, scan 90.

discussions with Elmina and the slave voyage database, we do know that the Courlanders were interested in Calabar and Allada as potential slaving markets. To use these markets, the Couronian ships would have needed to impress local figures of authority. Unlike the Gambia, where iron bars were essential to trade, the merchants in these places dealt predominantly in brass bracelets, although textiles and beads were also popular exchange goods.

Contemporaneous Dutch sources tell us that, in Calabar, the price for a slave was one iron bar or seventy brass bracelets.[150] Yet paying for slaves also came with extensive customs duties and expectations of gift giving. A Dutch interloper wrote of his experiences in 1652 at Calabar where he paid twenty-four coarse bracelets to the village in which he landed. He then distributed further bracelets to local nobles in order to allow the Europeans to trade.[151] At Allada the payments soon became overwhelming. The previous traders reported that there would be a welcome of 'at least 1,000 people, dancing and playing', all of whom had to be paid with shells equivalent to the value of 160 bracelets. The trader would then pay nobles and porters to take them to the *mansa*. Prices increased depending on how much the porters were required to carry. Beads and fabrics were also given to translators who conducted the conversation in Portuguese. Upon finally meeting the king, the Europeans would exchange silk of the finest quality, unless the party wanted to keep the better goods to bribe officials. The silk was paid in addition to roughly one pound of fine beads, six pieces of 'Cyprus cloth', and three pieces of rough Indian cotton. Having been permitted to trade, the Europeans could then purchase the king's own slaves before returning to the river and buying more goods there. After concluding the trading business, the Europeans would then pay high-status officials two pieces of fabric and the *mansa* two muskets with gunpowder or the equivalent silk that could pay for nine slaves.[152] A clear conclusion is that Couronian ships would have required a significant stock of varied goods as well as knowledge of local customs to engage in the African slave trade.

We have no evidence available for how Couronian slaves were treated on Tobago, only a few lines about their tasks and who could buy them. As such a comparison to other colonies is not possible and we might assume they were handled in a similar way to slaves in other colonies. There is therefore nothing to prove the assertions of Anderson and Berķis that slaves were treated comparatively well.[153] Such conclusions seemed to have been assumed on the basis that the Kettlers were less strict on serfs in their own lands than other nobles.[154] One cannot suppose that this was the case, given that Jakob had no real control over what happened in the colonies themselves, particularly regarding how a slave owner treated their personal slaves. Nevertheless, the dynamic between colonialism and labour in the

[150] Jones, *West Africa,* p. 32.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid., pp. 37-46.
[153] Andersons, *Senie Kurzemnieki Amerikā,* p. 366 and 368; Berkis, *The Reign of Duke James,* p.78.
[154] Merritt, 'The Colony of the Colonized', (p. 494).

Baltic and the same process in the Caribbean provides an interesting perspective on Courland's Atlantic activities.

Medieval and Early Modern Colonists: A Comparison between Livonia, Tobago, and Africa

The Baltic-German Courlanders could draw on colonial experience where they had become the political and cultural elite in Livonia, subjugating a largely indigenous peasantry economically through serfdom. In order to increase grain yields, serfs were forbidden from becoming alienated from the noble land upon which they worked. Such practices were introduced in Poland in 1540 and in Brandenburg in 1538. In Courland laws compelled towns to return any serfs that had fled their landlord there. It was at the noble's discretion how serfs were treated. Corporal punishment of varying severity was therefore a feature of the Livonian agricultural system.[155] The dynamic between the nobility and the peasantry was feudal rather than national, as scholars such as Hartmut Boockmann have pointed out, however the characterisation of the nobility as Germanic and the peasantry as native Baltic, present in the writings of contemporary writers of the early modern period, bestows an ethnic dimension to exploitation and domination in Livonia, contrasting with the serfdom which existed in other areas of the Commonwealth or Russia.[156]

Although serfdom and slavery were similar (the serf essentially became a slave to the landlord if they became indebted to them) the concepts are distinct. Slavery in the Atlantic was a capitalist investment to transport human resources to plantations which stimulated global business, not just in crops but sectors such as textile production.[157] Serfdom provided grain, a commodity high in demand, and arguably formed the basis of the nascent Dutch capitalist economy, but at a local level it was a relationship of indebtedness between landholder and peasant. The serf worked for the right to live on a lord's land and had not been transplanted from afar to satisfy the needs of global economic system. An important part of the middle passage was displacement over many thousands of miles. In Eastern European serfdom the opposite was true as peasants became increasingly confined to their plot of land. Additionally, serfs were not freely bought and sold in the same way that slaves were. Serfs were considered part of a family unit and thus not moved on individually if the landowner felt they could not afford to maintain them.

The differences between serfdom and slavery have not stopped comparisons between the two. Historians of Latvia and Livonia have frequently pointed out the similarities.[158] Horst Pietschmann argued that, in some respects, slavery compared favourably to serfdom as the Couronian slaves in

[155] Spekke, *History of Latvia*, p. 248; Berķis, *The History of the Duchy of Courland*, p. 58.
[156] Boockmann, *Der Deutsche Ordern*.
[157] Richard Drayton, 'The Collaboration of Labour: Slaves, Empires and Globalizations in the Atlantic World, c. 1600-1850' in *Globalization in World History,* ed. A.G. Hopkins (London: Pimlico, 2002), 98-114.
[158] Spekke, *History of Latvia*, p. 248; Rislakki, *The Case for Latvia*, p. 69; von Blomberg, *An Account of Livonia,* p. 289.

Tobago were 'better nourished' than dependent farmers in Courland.[159] Comparisons were also present in the early modern period. The work of Vera Lind has uncovered that soldiers from Hesse fighting in the American War of Independence (1775-1783), compared African-American slaves to the serfs they had seen in a Germanic context.[160] Although legally distinct, German writers continuously equated slavery and serfdom. Slavery often featured in debates over serfdom, predominantly as a device to prove the immorality and ineffectiveness of the more domestic form of labour exploitation.[161]

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Garlieb Merkel produced the most explicit equating of serfs with slaves. Writing at a time when opinion turned against the Atlantic slave trade, Merkel characterised the Germans who first settled in Livonia as 'greedy robbers' who sold the innocent Latvians 'like cattle'.[162] The Baltic-Germans, he asserted, had not bothered to establish structures in which Latvians could be enlightened and learn the faith, but instead worked them until they were exhausted or starved. The seizure of natural rights and property was an act of tyranny for Merkel, and it cast Latvians as a type of slave. Merkel used the word 'slave' throughout his text to emphasise his point of showing that the crimes and indignities that Europeans had thrust upon peoples around the globe, were also present in the Baltic.[163]

In other instances, writers have found it more apt to compare the Latvians to Amerindians rather than African slaves. The clearest point of comparison is the first encounter, followed by violent takeover. Merkel characterised the indigenous Baltic people as 'people of nature' who helpfully shared their knowledge of the area before being murdered in a Germanic blood bath.[164] He compared this episode to victims of colonisation across the world. He listed the Carib, the Iroquois, and the Māori, asking if the Latvians were any different to them. 'Luckily Livonia does not have particular masters in mining, otherwise they [the Latvian peasantry] would have to languish in the same [mines] as well as the Mexicans.'[165]

The same comparisons have been made throughout Livonian history. Bengt Oxenstierna, the Swedish governor-general in Livonia from 1662 to 1666, remarked that Germans mistrusted Latvians and

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[159] Horst Pietschmann, 'Atlantic History: History between European History and Global History' *in Atlantic History: History of the Atlantic system 1580-1830*, ed. Horst Pietschmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 11-54 (p. 25).
[160] Vera Lind, 'Crossing the Atlantic Twice: Black African and Americans in Late Eighteenth Century Germany-Encounters of Color, Race, Identity and the Exotic', unpublished paper, p. 5.
[161] Josef Köstlbauer, ''I have no Shortage of Moors': Mission, Representation, and the Elusive Semantics of Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Moravian Sources' in *Beyond Exceptionalism*, eds. von Mallinckrodt et al., 109-136, (p. 123).
[162] 'gierige Räuber'and 'als das Vieh'. Merkel, *Die Letten*, p. 24 and 27.
[163] 'Sklave' and 'Sklaven'. Ibid. The term is found for example on p. 30, p. 108, p. 163 and p. 224.
[164] 'Naturmenschen'. Ibid., pp. 23-25.
[165] 'Bergwerke hat Liefland nicht zum Glück seine eigenthümlichen Herren; sonst hätten diese, so gut als die Mexikaner'. Ibid., p. 25.

Estonians thus treating them like 'the Spaniards had dealt with the pathetic and simple-minded Americans'.[166] The work of Stefan Donecker has shown that sixteenth century Baltic-German writers who described Baltic peoples, such as Plinius in 1595, borrowed from the accounts of Columbus, Vespucci, and the 1544 *Cosmographia*. Mimicking accounts of America, he described a rich and fertile land, populated by naïve and innocent natives. The same process of gift-giving, followed by a brutal assertion of colonial dominance from the newcomers, are described in both accounts of America and of the Baltic.[167] The scene of the first encounter is exaggerated by writers such as Plinius, even though it seems unlikely that northern Germans could have been ignorant of the Eastern Baltic. The narrative emphasises the otherness disconnecting Germanic and Baltic people as well as the supposed backwardness of the original Baltic inhabitants with their childlike wonder for the newcomers. This, following post-colonial definitions from theorists such as Memmi, constitutes a typical colonial narrative.[168] Some accounts were very extreme in removing indigenous Baltic peoples from 'civilised Europe' and placing them in the newly discovered Americas. Enrico Martinez of Hamburg, who visited both Courland and Mexico City in the sixteenth century opined, 'I believe that the former [the indigenous Couronians] and the latter [the Chicimeca people of central Mexico] are one and the same people.'[169]

Harry Merritt's title for his 2010 article on the Latvian memory of Courland's colonialism is entitled '*The Colony of the Colonized*', recognising how Latvian national narratives have taken ownership of Kettler expansion. Merritt realises, of course, that the Couronian colony was not Latvian but originated from the Baltic-German duke. In a Baltic context the Couronian elite had already participated in a prior process of colonisation and had not been colonised themselves, not even by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The situation was more akin to that of the English colonising the Caribbean and Africa, having had prior experience in Ireland, or the Swedes colonising the Delaware with a history of colonialism in the very north of Scandinavia. The Couronian elite were historic European colonisers, albeit in an alternative medieval context. To what extent did this ongoing colonial experience in Europe inform expansion into the Atlantic?

Without an idea of how slavery was handled in Tobago, there is not much one can do to link Couronian Atlantic slave labour with a particularly ducal style of Eastern European serfdom. The two entities were similar in conception, however, the information available does not point to any other inspiration for Courland's own triangular trade than the practice already performed by Atlantic

[166] Donecker, 'Est Vera India Septemtrio', (p. 417).
[167] Ibid., (pp. 402-406).
[168] Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* 3rd ed. (London: Earthscan, 2003).
[169] Donecker, 'Est Vera India Septemtrio', (p. 399).

colonisers such as the English, Dutch or Portuguese. It is highly likely that the Kettlers followed the precedent set by practitioners in Western Europe.

In terms of the encounter with indigenous people in the Caribbean, the Baltic context provided a reference point which seeped into intellectual discourse. The dukes, with many failings, attempted to create an atmosphere of amiability between their colonists and the indigenous people with whom they interacted. This contradicted the first encounter narrative presented by people like Plinius, who was ready to justify a brutal response to what he saw as backwards people.[170] A similar contradiction has been noted in Gunlög Fur's study of Swedish attitudes towards the Lenape on the Delaware and the Sámi in the Arctic Circle. The Swedish state treated the latter as subjects of the monarch, and they were therefore required to pay tribute. Sweden inflicted religious persecution upon the Sámi and violent reprisals following resistance.[171] Like the Native Americans, objects from the Sámi were displayed and fetishised in the south of Scandinavia as fragments of an unfamiliar culture, however, relations with the Lenape people themselves were not as antagonistic or absolute as the Swedish handling of the Sámi.[172] As Fur points out, much depended on the Lenape reaction to the Swedes, which was mostly clement when they felt that the Swedes could offer something in trade and protection.[173] However, it was also vital for the Swedes, maintaining a small colony and lacking confidence in a new environment. New Sweden therefore strived to give gifts to its neighbours to develop a legal basis for landholding, and to make regular pacts of friendship, even if Swedish officials, such as Governor Johan Printz harboured personal distaste for the Lenape.[174] Such an approach was also essential in Courland's case where the colonists required knowledge and supplies to maintain a colony with meagre human resources.

At around the same time that Jakob asked his governors to deal with Amerindians and Senegambians with amiability, the duke was endeavouring to learn more about the indigenous people in Courland. In 1649, Paul Einhorn, published his history of Latvia, which he dedicated to his employer, Jakob Kettler.[175] The aim of the book was to learn more about the land which the Baltic-German elite inhabited, including its people. Einhorn therefore included a long introduction to Baltic Indo-European language, the geographical spread of Baltic and Finno-Ugric people, and the traditions Latvians adhered to during festivals. The pagan nature of Latvian festivals and its society in general occupied a great deal of Einhorn's thoughts. He noted that pagan temples were often more lavish than

[170] Ibid., (p. 402).
[171] Fur, *Colonialism in the Margins*.
[172] Nordin, 'Tactile Relations'.
[173] Fur, *Colonialism in the Margins*.
[174] Magdalena Naum, '"How it would be to Walk on the New World with Feet from the Old": Facing Otherness in Colonial America' in *Facing Otherness,* eds. Naum and Ekengren, 243-260 (p. 245).
[175] Einhorn, *Historia Lettica.*

churches and that Latvians often worshiped in woods.[176] He described the Latvians as a people who lived by the laws of nature and had consequently become 'a hard and irrepressible' people, used to 'hard food and hard work'.[177] The Latvians, according to Einhorn, were not learned and their pre-German society had been chaotic and unruly in the absence of laws or a monarchical structure.[178] Einhorn was convinced that Germans possessed a God-given ascendancy over the Latvians and had been right to put them to work. The coming of the crusades had implemented a structure to society that lifted Livonia from barbarity. Einhorn did not have much good to say about the Latvian character as a whole. He wrote damningly:

> '[A]s experience has shown, and it is known to the whole German nation, that from youth they are inclined to all sorts of wickedness and charges such as lying, deceiving and stealing. They are also malevolent, clever and devious, to all enemies they are abusive, mocking, haughty, vainglorious and hypocritical. They can be lovely, friendly and humble at first glance, but it is a pure deceit […] to put it briefly, there is almost no nation to be found who give to thievery as much as this one'.[179]

The Latvians, Einhorn found, had a particular hatred of the Germans who they mocked relentlessly between themselves. Instead of dismissing that as Latvian nature, Einhorn found the view to be justified. After all, the crusaders had taken their land away by the power of the sword and then forced them into hard labour. The Latvians were taught with tyranny and had been shown nothing of Christian love. 'In truth', concluded Einhorn, 'our dogs have it far better than the poor peasants of this land'.[180] For Einhorn the situation was of extreme concern. He worried that, if the nobility were to continue their suppression of the Latvians, then he foresaw that the peasantry could rise up to usurp their masters.

Einhorn's solution to this nightmare scenario was to improve conditions for Latvian peasants and, crucially, to offer more Christian instruction to them in their own language. He recommended bringing Latvians into the German nation through education programmes and missionary work, which would prove that Christianity was a religion of love rather than of oppression. The peasantry associated Christianity with violence, he claimed, as the original crusaders had neglected spreading the word of God in favour of taking what they could for themselves. He argued that Latvians could

[176] Ibid., p. 14.
[177] 'harten und unbändigen' and 'harter Speise und schwerer Arbeit'. Ibid., p. 42.
[178] Ibid., pp. 25-26.
[179] 'Sonst sind sie, wie die Erfahrung bezeuget, und der gantzen Teutsche Nation bekant, von jugend auff zu allerhand Untugend und Lastern geneigt, als zum lügen, triegen und stehlen, sind auch arglistig, klug und verschlagen, zu allem Bösen, schimpflich, spöttisch, hochmüthig, ruhmräthig, heuchelich, können sich für Augen lieblich, freundlich und demüthig bezeugen, ist aber eitel Betrug […] Kürzlich zu reden, ist fast keine Nation zu finden, die dem Diebstal dermassen ergeben, wie diese.' Ibid., p. 43.
[180] 'Unsere Hunde haben in Wahrheit viel besser als das ame Bauevolck des Landes'. Ibid., p. 58.

not be allowed to become isolated and resentful, but instead recommended that they should be integrated into a society of Christian honour.[181]

Einhorn's text, although written about the Latvians, had implications for Jakob's colonial strategy as it described how a seventeenth century coloniser should deal with an indigenous people. If we are to answer Merkel's question about whether the Latvians were regarded as higher or lower status than the 'Carib', we might justifiably reply that they were regarded as the same. Matthias Beck's account of the Latvian colony described a hierarchy where a greater status afforded a greater share of land. In this system, former serfs were permitted to plant the same sized plot as an Amerindian inhabitant of Tobago.[182] It was also the duke's intention to treat both with a comparable measure of clemency. Like Printz in New Sweden, Einhorn mistrusted the indigenous population but recommended that cooperation and mutual respect would prevent the disaster of a violent rebellion. Jakob's attempted policy of friendliness to indigenous peoples in the Atlantic followed that general recommendation.

The more specific recommendation made by Einhorn was to engender goodwill through the use of Christian teaching. One of the interesting curiosities of Jakob's colonial ventures was that he included Lutheran missionaries. He urged them to spread the faith at a time when no other Northern European colonial power placed much interest in missionary work, which was mostly the concern of the Catholic Iberian colonisers. Jakob was also not a man of religious zeal, neither domestically, in his religiously tolerant colonies, nor in his private family life.[183] Yet he sent missionaries into Africa and called upon Tobagonian slaves to be given a Christian faith. I believe that this compulsion followed directly from Einhorn's concerns that another indigenous population living alongside Courlanders, namely the Latvians, were becoming alienated and restless as a result of never properly encountering Christianity. This is the most tangible parallel between Jakob's approach in the Baltic, and his approach in the Atlantic.

Conclusion

The dukes attempted to create a colonial environment in which the European colonists and the indigenous people lived in amiable cooperation. This approach linked to the slow process of encouraging better work conditions and more Christian engagement with the Latvian peasantry. The Latvians were also an indigenous people and were held in a system of hard labour to satisfy commercial demands, similar to but distinct from slavery. Neither the desire to create a friendly atmosphere with non-European people, nor the context of Latvian serfdom appears to have affected

[181] Ibid., pp. 59-63.
[182] Jekabson-Lemanis, 'Balts in the Caribbean', (p. 39).
[183] Dammann, 'Die Ersten Lutherischen Geistlichen'; Uber, 'Die Religionspolitik Herzog Jakobs'.

the Couronian implementation of the slave trade, which was inspired by Western European precedent and not adjusted.

The dukes strove for good relations in several ways. These included full engagement in trade, pursuing moderate missionary work, offering land on Couronian plantations, and maintaining diplomatic correspondence. The fact that Amerindians may have been permitted to own land in the Couronian colony is a remarkable facet of Jakob's colonial vision and it is a feature which makes his venture truly unique among his contemporaries.

Yet the historian should not be fooled into believing that Couronian colonialism was somehow more benevolent towards non-European people than any other colonial power. The trope of establishing friendly relations was a strategy, borrowed from Courland's attempts at neutrality in Europe, which aimed to dispel the threat of disruption. Colonies in the Americas and outposts in Africa were often hamstrung by a lack of resources and knowledge. This was particularly the case in Africa where European traders relied on the mercy of local rulers and the commercial structures of indigenous merchant communities. As an especially low-resourced polity, Courland could not afford to be violent in its endeavours in the Atlantic where it did not possess many nearby structures of insurance.

Moreover, the relationship between Courlanders and indigenous people did not rely on the duke, but on the agents on the ground who constructed them. Such people, hardened by incidents of violence towards them and the pressures of climate, sustenance, and disease, were not keen to be very tolerant. Governors such as Mollens mistrusted any Amerindian visitor from outside, whilst Schmoll and Monck displayed outright hostility. Furthermore, there was a significant lack of understanding for indigenous patterns of activity. By offering land to Amerindians, the Courlanders assumed that their system of landed exploitation through plantations was automatically a more progressive and desirable prospect than older patterns of Amerindian economic activity. Couronaian governors were irked and confused by the mobility of the Kali'nago and Kali'na whose networks were not confined to single islands but stretched across the whole Antilles and into South America. The Couronian presence disrupted this system of interaction which was highly valued by the Kali'nago. Consequently, they unwittingly made themselves into enemies and targets for Amerindian raiding, despite clumsy efforts at friendship.

In Africa, relations took the form of business and rental agreements. The Mansa of Barra defended Couronian interests when the WIC briefly occupied St Andreas Island. This may be because the Courlanders were more diligent in fulfilling their obligations, but it is also likely that the *mansa* did not appreciate decisions over his land being made behind his back. When it was clear that the Couronian garrison could no longer be beneficial, there seems to have been little indigenous complaint at Holmes' usurpation of the island. Despite the obligation to gain permission from African

leaders, the dukes preferred to resolve their concerns over African trade and landholding in the courts of Europe. Jakob only wrote to Kombo, seemingly in desperation towards the end of his life.

The final conclusion regards Courland's place in the slave trade. Couronian activity spread much further afield than St Andreas Island and it is because of the slave trade that they were found in Sierra Leone, Calabar, Allada, and Elmina. The Couronian share of the slave trade was obviously diminutive, but it was also far larger than the two ships included on the slave voyage database. If Couronian colonialism had been more successful, then slavery would have constituted a major part of its operation, potentially acting as a source of enslaved labour for other colonial powers.

Conclusions

The Couronian colonial project did not fulfil its full potential and therefore the duchy remained one of the most diminutive colonisers on the Atlantic stage. The case study portrays a venture which was not permitted to establish a distinctive character. One feature of uniqueness was presented at the very start of the thesis, which is the role of Duke Jakob Kettler. The Couronian colonial structure, like any colonial structure, was not determined by the influence of one man; I have shown that the networks beyond the duke were extensive and influential. Nevertheless, the role of the duke was more prominent than most potentates, as he acted outside of a company structure and managed even the minutiae of colonial affairs. Jakob's colonial venture was also a private initiative which was mostly detached from the Couronian state. In the reign of Friedrich Casimir and the protectorate of Ferdinand, the personal influence of the duke was diminished as neither possessed a personal compulsion nor the resources to pursue it.

The motivations for Jakob Kettler to begin such an ambitious expansion was part of a long-term process of the Kettlers attempting to strengthen their own ducal house. The domestic Baltic situation was not advantageous for the dukes and there was little room for aggrandisement. The outlet for developing economic and political advantages was small, whilst the existential threats to the Kettlers' position were great. Expansion westward, into broader European trade and diplomacy, as well as Atlantic colonialism, built upon the successes of Wilhelm and Friedrich Kettler. These successes exploited the outward-facing power of the duke to form prestigious connections, provide niche services, and form a neutral character beyond the Baltic space, enabling the Kettlers to prevent disaster after Wilhelm's exile.

Jakob used Baltic power as a springboard to reach new opportunities in alternative spaces. He utilised ducal land by building industrious centres of production, the ability to appoint envoys, and dynastic connections with Northern Europe's leading families. Through this process, the ducal part of the Couronian state created a new Couronian identity beyond the Baltic, which could better benefit the Kettlers. This Atlantic Courland sought to be removed from Eastern Baltic conflict, break out of Dutch commercial dominance in the Baltic Sea, find outlets for economic betterment without noble obstruction, and assert ducal independence.

Yet the duke was, in fact, dependent on a variety of actors. Ducal interests in Atlantic Courland required many different people and linkages to represent them and move them beyond Courland, where the duke remained for much of his rule. The character of expansionist Courland was articulated abroad through several channels, including female familial connections, the pre-existing diplomatic connections of larger powers, ad-hoc envoy appointments, and factors. These Couronian representatives asserted Courland's distinctiveness as a neutral trading power that did not just deal in grain, but a diverse set of goods made in the duchy's new manufactories. The establishment of trading

niches dramatically increased Couronian extra-Baltic shipping, which had been practically non-existent until the 1640s.

Although heavily disrupted by Swedish invasion in 1658, diplomatic links and diverse trade with major powers in Western Europe, enabled the duchy to break out of the Baltic status quo and establish itself outside of the constraining Baltic space. Nevertheless, recruitment practices were still heavily rooted in connections available in the Baltic and Northern Europe. Dynastic connections, as well as the recruitment of sailors and colonists, centred around common Baltic networks such as the Scottish diaspora, Dutch specialists, and workers available at the Danish Sound Toll. These practices of recruiting personnel from around the Baltic and North Seas, caused Courland's expansion to feature moderate ethnic diversity. This contradicts the national narratives which prioritise Germanic or Latvian participation.

The diversity of backgrounds present on Couronian ships was not particular to ducal trade; enlisting sailors from a multitude of areas was a common convention. The same applies for the recruitment of colonial governors and colonial settlers, who often hailed from outside of Courland. This practice reflects the fluid nature of recruitment and allegiances during the early modern period. Although Courland was not unique in the foreign character of its colonial actors, its position as a small-power polity necessitated the use of such people. The duchy lacked both the expertise and the population to pursue a colonial policy self-sufficiently. The situation was compounded by serfdom which tied much of Courland's population to the land that they farmed. The offer of freedom to serfs in the colonies shows that such people were accepted as colonists, however, it is unlikely that many were able to take this opportunity.

The acceptance of serfs on Tobago's plantations is one way in which ducal authority attempted to collect enough people to populate the outposts. Another was the predilection for religious tolerance, which included a propensity to work with Catholics to an extent that other Protestant colonisers did not. The principle of religious tolerance harked back to the Baltic context where it was enforced in Poland-Lithuania. Duke Jakob himself was not a religiously minded individual. However, being open to a broad range of faiths meant that Couronian colonies could theoretically attract more colonists and specialists. This was particularly important in Senegambia, where Luso-Africans were important mediators.

The policies of Courland's colonialism focused on accumulating more business opportunities. Mirroring Couronian trading practices in Europe, the Courlanders offered commodities to as broad a market as possible. This included offering slaves to Spain and timber to Barbados. Again, such a practice was common in other colonial approaches; Couronian aspirations for free ports were implemented by Dutch and Danish colonists, and the slaves used on Spanish and French plantations were often provided by foreigners. However, such strategies were necessary for Courland as it lacked

power and resources. This situation also meant that ducal agents could not afford to antagonise other colonial powers, which would easily succeed in expelling hostile Courlanders from Atlantic spaces. Couronian discourse abroad, therefore, needed to emphasise either how harmless or how useful Courland's activities could be for other colonists.

The duke's idealistic outlook towards other European powers in the Atlantic required his agents to prove their goodwill. Ducal representatives in Europe sought legal foundations for Couronian colonialism in the form of passports, treaties, and permissions. This theoretically provided Couronian ships and colonists with an insurance against European hostility. It was also linked to the experience the Couronian rulers had with neutrality, which in the Couronian perception, entailed engagement with any power who was able to safeguard or promote Couronian commerce. Because of the failure of domestic Couronian neutrality in 1658, leading to the loss of the outposts, Couronian representatives engaged heavily with European powers in an attempt to win them back. These attempts ultimately weakened Jakob's desire for full autonomy over his colonial project, as Courland was forced to find foreign partners and guarantors for its endeavours.

Necessary engagement with foreign colonisers entangled Couronian ambitions with the interests of other powers. This often led to Courland becoming part of global colonial competition and conflict, contrasting with its stated neutrality. For instance, the duke's 1664 agreement with England was written in the context of English conflict with the United Provinces. As the duke craved a diplomatic basis for colonisation, the treaty remained central to Couronian plans, even after it had become invalid. Such agreements caused a slight adjustment in Courland's alignment in favour of English royal power and favouring English personnel. Courland's colonial actors in the outposts themselves went to even further lengths to involve themselves in colonial competition because the threat was more immediate to them. Ultimately, conflict with other colonisers was unavoidable and foreign opposition was one of the main reasons why the duke was unable to re-establish his colonies. The Atlantic space was just as hostile a place as the Baltic space from which the duke had attempted to expand.

A similar process occurred in the case of Couronian relations with indigenous people. As a consequence of Courland's lowly standing, lack of resources, and dearth of expertise, the ducal strategy dictated that indigenous people should be regarded warmly. In Africa, Senegambian rulers and traders were far more powerful than the Europeans, so such an approach was also accepted by other Atlantic traders. Polities such as Sweden also displayed this outlook towards Amerindians. However, the Courlanders brought unique innovations, for instance, the distribution of plantation land to the Kali'na and the provision of Lutheran missionaries in Africa. The latter policy was inspired by new thinking regarding the Latvian peasantry, who were intellectually linked to the Amerindians by accounts of the first encounters.

However, the overall Couronian understanding of indigenous people did not deviate very far from a typical Northern European approach. Slavery does not seem to have been affected by ideas of serfdom but followed an emerging Atlantic model involving transportation and capital. The Courlanders also misunderstood the indigenous structures of society and economy in the Lesser Antilles. They therefore disrupted the Kali'nago just as much as any other power and were regarded as enemies by Amerindian people. The raids the Couronian presence inspired caused the outlook of Courland's governors to harden and become violent, eschewing ducal advice. Moreover, the Couronian aims still focused on an exploitation of the Atlantic space which meant exploiting both Africans and Amerindians. There is therefore very little evidence to suggest that Couronian colonialism treated indigenous people any better than colonialisms originating from any other polity.

Couronian colonialism operated across a broad range of influences, both inside and outside its own structures. Whilst the duke was essential to the colonial structure and re-imagining Courland as an Atlantic polity, a plethora of different actors and agents shaped the implementation of his personal project. Activity in the outposts demonstrated some unique features, inspired by experiences in the Baltic space and designed to accumulate as much security, commercial activity, and prestige as possible. However, many traits mentioned in the historiography: republicanism, absolutism, clemency towards indigenous people, the number of Couronian colonists, and the centrality of Duke Jakob himself, have all been exaggerated.

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