

**THE DANISH COLONIZATION**

**OF**

**ST. JOHN, 1718-1733**

**by**

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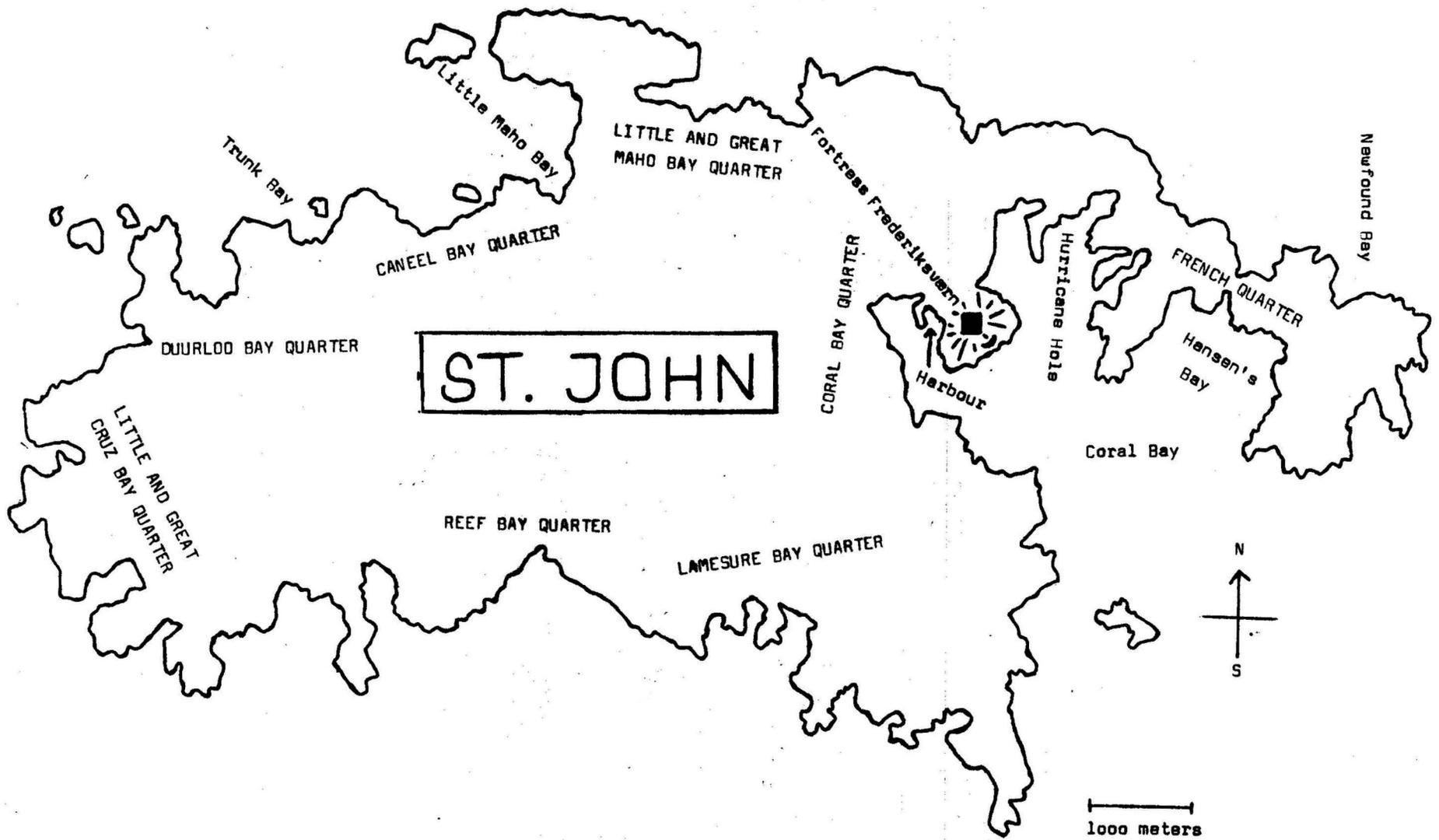


FIGURE 1: ST. JOHN, SHOWING EARLY QUARTERS

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## INTRODUCTION

This study grew out of a history course entitled "The Danish West Indies" taught by Professors Ove Hornby and Ole Justesen at the University of Copenhagen in 1975-1976. The course work involved the study of primary sources in Danish archives, as well as fieldwork in the Virgin Islands during February-January 1976 (1).

The idea of the work emerged during our visit to the ruins of Fort Frederiksvaern (now called "Fortsbjerg") at Coral Bay, St. John. Here we found an imposing historic site, built by the Danes to command a large and beautiful natural harbor. As the physical conditions very much favor the development of a naval and/or commercial maritime establishment, one naturally wondered why Denmark wanted St. John when such evident possibilities were never pursued. Under the Danish flag St. John was always subordinate to St. Thomas and St. Croix, leading a rather anonymous life.

This peripheral status has influenced historical scholarship, which has neglected St. John, treating it primarily as an appendage to St. Thomas. A characteristic feature of the general historical surveys of the Danish West Indies is that St. John is seldom mentioned apart from the slave rebellion of 1733-34. For example, the subject index of the major history of the Danish West Indies (2) does not contain a single entry for St. John.

Influenced by these considerations I set out to research why the Danes colonized St. John, and how this colonization was carried out. This study is the result of that investigation. It has been limited chronologically to the period between 1718 and 1733. However, lines have been drawn back to 1675, when it is possible to ascertain the first Danish interest in St. John. The relation to foreign powers has also been discussed in order to understand the occupation of St. John within the general framework of European colonial rivalry in the West Indies.

The year 1718 is a natural starting point, because permanent Danish possession began then. The delimitation of 1733 has been selected because a massive slave rebellion erupted in that year that paralyzed the economic development of St. John for some time thereafter. Before the island could fully recover from this cataclysmic event Denmark started the occupation of St. Croix, which created new interests and relations.

## CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO COLONIZATION

### Motives to Colonization

Before dealing with the Danish colonization of St. John, it must be asked why Denmark ventured into the tropics after 1650 when there was risk of conflict with stronger European nations, and when she had problems enough in the Baltic.

The answer clearly relates to the prospect of economic gain. This motive is explicitly set forth in the West India Company's Charter of 1671, wherein King Christian V made it known that he found it beneficial to found a Company in "the interests of commerce and the dependence thereof to general continuation and increase" (1). The Company was allowed "both the island of St. Thomas in the Caribbean islands, and other islands there, or the mainland of America, on which they want to plant colonies...." The Danes made no pretense that they regarded themselves as bearers of the Christian message, as did the Iberian nations. It is mentioned in paragraph 5 of the Charter that the Indians should be taught Christianity, but this point had rather low priority, as it was known by 1671 that few, if any, Indians still inhabited the islands to be colonized.

When considering the establishment of trans-Atlantic colonies attention must also be drawn to nationalistic motivations. Sweden, Denmark's Baltic rival, had begun to take an interest in West Indian and African colonies (2). From a political point of view Denmark was being outdistanced by the Swedes by 1650, and because of competition and prestige she could not sit back and watch calmly as they got ahead in the race for the riches from foreign parts of the world. Still, from either a materialistic or a political point of view, there is no disputing that the desire for economic gain provided the primary incentive behind Danish expansion into the Caribbean, and for the colonization of St. John.

### Antecedents

In March 1718, thirty-six years after establishing a permanent colony on St. Thomas, Denmark formally occupied the island of St. John. The successful occupation of this uninhabited island, located just two miles east of St. Thomas, climaxed almost five decades of effort by the Danes (3).

In accordance with the Company's 1671 Charter, authorizing the colonization of other islands along with St. Thomas, Governor Jorgen Iversen sent two men with munitions and provisions to St. John on July 27, 1675. Denmark viewed this action as an official possession, and it became the basis of subsequent Danish claims to the island. The first settlers appear to have engaged in agriculture, as seventy-nine pounds of tobacco were delivered from St. John to St. Thomas in 1680.

Governors Adolf and Nicolai Esmitt continued Iversen's initiative, despite persistent protests from both the English and the Spanish. By 1684, according to Governor Adolf Esmitt, the English had driven Danish subjects from St. John on three separated occasions (4). However, these punitive raids did not discourage the Danes, because in 1686 provisions were sent to St. John from St. Thomas, indicating a continuing presence.

In 1686 a high ranking Company official, Commissioner Mikkel Mikkelsen, advised that efforts to settle St. John should be abandoned until a later date. Presumably this retreat

was necessitated by the chaotic conditions prevailing in St. Thomas, together with strong protests from foreign powers. Adolf Esmi's new instructions of 1687 recommended that he populate St. John with four to six persons "when time and occasion are favorable" (5), but nothing further happened, and the plan receded into the background until being revived in 1715. In the interval St. John was mentioned only in connection with timber cutting, while officially Denmark maintained her claims to the island (6).

While unsettled conditions in St. Thomas contributed to the failure to colonize St. John between 1671 and 1718, another important deterrent was fear of foreign reprisal. Denmark's tardy entry into the race for West Indian colonies had brought her into conflict with those European powers already established in the region. To understand the circumstances surrounding Denmark's occupation of St. John in 1718, her relations with her colonial neighbors must be considered, for the timing of the colonization, as well as its successful outcome, were partially dictated by international factors.

Nominally, the Spaniards exercised sovereignty over all American areas in accordance with four Papal Bulls issued by Pope Alexander VI (7). Spanish sovereignty in the West Indies ended when the North-West European nations began to colonize the smaller islands during the first half of the 17th Century. As a matter of fact, there was ample room, as the Spanish concentrated on the Greater Antilles. But they would not allow others to take possession of islands which might be used as military or smuggling bases for undermining the Spanish Empire. Spanish efforts to prevent other nations from settling in the West Indies proved vain. By the time of the Danish colonization of St. John they had begun to accept the presence of other European nations (8), while still formally maintaining their claim to the entire region (9).

Generally speaking, relations between the various European nations in the Caribbean were characterized by an intense struggle for power. This was especially the case during the second half of the 17th Century when Denmark, the last of the colonial powers, established a permanent colony on St. Thomas in 1672. This settlement brought the Danes into a clash of interests with the Spaniards, who were nominally sovereign, as well as the British, who claimed all the Virgin Islands (10).

The British Governor of the Leeward Islands was hostile toward the Danish occupation of St. Thomas. But King Christian V complained to the English King, who reacted by dismissing the offending Governor. The new Governor, William Stapleton, was instructed not to do anything that might create hostility between Denmark and England. Rather, Stapleton was instructed to "exercise all acts of friendship to the inhabitants of St. Thomas, and all that King's subjects in the West Indies" (11). Thus, the English initially accepted Danish possession of St. Thomas.

In the 1680's new issues emerged to cause friction between the Danes and their neighbors. First, St. Thomas reached a state of social anarchy under the governorships of the brothers Esmi and Gabriel Milan. The Esmits did not hesitate to buy goods from pirates, which gave the colony the reputation as a pirates' nest. This outlaw society particularly angered the British, who were making a major effort to destroy the pirates and privateers then swarming about the West Indies. Although they protested repeatedly (12), the British continued to tolerate the Danish colony.

The Danes on St. Thomas also crossed British interests by claiming and trying to settle the neighboring islands of St. John and Crab Island (Vieques). By 1684, according to Governor Adolf Esmi, the English had driven the Danes off St. John three times (13). Crab Island belonged to the Spanish, but the British also had claims to it. In 1698 the Danes actually founded an outpost (called "Kronborg") there under the leadership of Claus

Hansen (14), but this settlement, protested by Great Britain, proved short lived. Thereafter, although the Danes refrained from further colonization attempts, they maintained their claims to this island, as well as to St. John (15).

When the Danes revived their effort to colonize St. John around 1715 land had become scarce on the neighboring British islands, causing aspiring planters to look for new settlement opportunities. In 1716 Governor Hamilton of the Leeward Islands informed the Council of Trade and Plantations in London that several planters in Anguilla and St. Kitts wanted to settle on St. Croix, then owned by the French. Hamilton opposed any such population dispersal, as it would weaken the main islands (16). During a drought in 1717 the planters on Anguilla again asked Hamilton's permission to colonize St. Croix or other Virgin Islands. Hamilton requested special instructions from the Council of Trade and Plantations (17); but before he received a reply a group of planters departed for Crab Island to establish a colony (18). Again, in 1718, planters in Anguilla, Tortola and Spanish Town (Virgin Gorda) pressed for allowance to settle in St. Croix because of the persistence of the worse drought in living memory (19). In January 1718 the Council declared itself in accord with Hamilton's point of view, and instructed him to prevent an occupation of Crab Island and any further emigration. Discontented planters were to be encouraged to settle on lands recently taken from the French on St. Kitts (20).

Thus, there was restlessness in the British colonies at the very time the Danes were considering colonizing St. John. British planters wanted to colonize unoccupied islands, primarily St. Croix and Crab Island. Apparently they had little interest in St. John, which was said to have little agricultural value (21). Nonetheless, St. John must have held some attraction for British authorities, who needed to pacify their discontented planters, but worried that the colonization of either Crab Island or St. Croix might lead to a confrontation with the Spanish or the French who had strong claims to them (22). Thus, it is understandable that the British would want to prevent the Danes from spreading into St. John.

When the question about the Danish occupation of St. John was first raised in London, the King asked the Council of Trade and Plantations for an opinion on the matter. The Council was presented with the Danish envoy's memorial of August 9, 1717 detailing Denmark's claims in the West Indies. In this document the envoy referred to the 1672 letter from King Charles II that ordered Governor Stapleton to show respect to the Danes. The envoy did not think that the letter limited Danish sovereignty to St. Thomas (23).

The Council naturally did not agree with his interpretation. They claimed that the 1672 letter did not allow for further Danish expansion. Instead, the Council pointed out that in 1682 Charles II had ordered Stapleton to prevent the Danes from colonizing any of the other Virgin Islands. Consequently, affirming that the British King held an "undoubted right" to all the Virgin Islands, the Council advised the King that suitable precautions should be taken against a Danish occupation of St. John (24). However, as will be seen, the British were unwilling to support this "right" with power.

The Spanish had also been hostile to the Danish occupation of St. Thomas against which they protested in 1673 and 1675 (25). However, they reluctantly tolerated its existence (26). At the time the Danes revived their plan to colonize St. John relations between the two powers were strained by disputes over fishing rights (Danish subjects were fishing and taking tortoises near Crab Island and Puerto Rico) and smuggling between St. Thomas and Puerto Rico. Relations were further soured when Spanish colonial authorities found out that their Governor in Puerto Rico was trading illegally with Governor Mikkel Crone of St. Thomas (27).

The Spanish answer to these illegal activities was privateering. By 1719, according to Governor Bredal, a total of eight Danish vessels had been captured by the Spanish since Governor Crone's administration (28). In their complaint to the Spanish against these seizures the Company Directors admitted that illegal trade had been carried on from St. Thomas, but maintained that it was not the Company's responsibility (29).

From the foregoing it can be seen that when Denmark revived her plan to colonize St. John her relations with Great Britain and Spain were far from harmonious. Under the circumstances, why then did Denmark risk further provoking these major powers by colonizing the relatively small island of St. John?

## CHAPTER 2: THE COLONIZATION

### Incentives to Colonization

Governor Crone appears to have revived the plan to colonize St. John early in 1715 when he wrote to the Company that before he resigned he would:

view Crab Island and St. John and immediately give a complete report of their situation, as this island [St. Thomas] becomes meager and worse every day. Furthermore, it is a shame to let such islands lie deserted since, as far as I can ascertain, they could yield great profits, [and I] presume that the noble gentlemen will find my proposition founded on such ground that they will have these islands populated and inhabited (1).

Nonetheless, it was the planters of St. Thomas who took the initiative. In July 1715 Crone reported that "Johan Heinrich Sieben had made a proposal to develop St. John, explaining that there were 15 persons who contemplated going there if permitted" (2). In November 1716 Governor Bredal reported that "the island of St. John tempts many citizens of this island [St. Thomas] to go and build", but that fear of British reprisals discouraged them from the attempt. Bredal believed that if it could be made certain that there would be no British attack, St. John could quickly be made useful to the Company (3).

What prompted this initiative? For one thing, St. Thomas was experiencing agricultural difficulties. Governor Crone observed that its soil was becoming exhausted. Moreover, there was a severe drought in 1715, which necessitated the replanting of sugar cane and drove up the price of provisions (4). These conditions not only explain the timing of the initiative, but also why it originated in the West Indies rather than from the Company in Copenhagen.

But the planters had other problems. Bredal reported an internally induced growth of population in St. Thomas (5), which meant that plantations with a tendency to falling profits had to feed more people. Furthermore, falling sugar prices were reported in mid-1716 (6), a serious situation, especially for those planters who during the prosperous years of the War of Spanish Succession (1702-1713) had invested heavily in sugar works (7).

The individual planter had only one solution to save the situation: increased production. The possibilities of accomplishing this, however, were limited. First, the plantations on St. Thomas were not large (8). Secondly, arable land was limited, and was already being cultivated intensively (9). Third, St. Thomas was almost completely occupied by the plantations (10), so the problems could not be solved by further acquisitions on the island. Therefore, it was an obvious solution for many planters to think of new cultivation on nearby St. John.

The Company did not react to Crone's letters of 1715. However, they did respond quickly to Bredal's letter of November 1716. The Directors found it desirable that some St. Thomas residents should begin the occupation of St. John. However, a written agreement should first be concluded containing conditions "which would be agreeable to both the Company and the planters". The proposed conditions were to be sent to the Company without delay for review and approval (11). The Company thus gave Bredal permission to proceed with the plan. Concurrently, the Directors requested King Frederik IV to ask the British Government to respect the Order of 1672 issued by King Charles II (12).

Unfortunately, no documentary sources have been found which can explain the Company's decision. However, Mariager, the Company historian, cited both internal and external considerations (13). He claimed the Company was set on the colonization due to the complaints received from the planters in 1715. This seems credible, for it is certainly likely that the Company might have regarded colonization as a way of pacifying the discontented planters.

As for the external factor, the Company, according to Mariager, was worried because of the English threats to occupy St. John and Crab Island, both of which the Company claimed (14). The Directors knew that in the spring of 1716 the English had been on both islands to inspect them (15). It is probable, that the Directors saw this interest as a challenge to its claims, which they resolved to assert. This might explain why the Company did not react to the colonization initiative until 1716.

The Company's approval was not immediately followed by action in the West Indies. In the summer of 1717 Bredal wrote that none of the inhabitants would go to St. John before being assured that "the English would not do any damage to them there" (16). By autumn interest among the planters was waning. Bredal nonetheless observed that if the planters were guaranteed that they would not be attacked St. John "would be populated within a short time". Bredal also reported that some British subjects had recently tried to settle Crab Island. However, he believed that it would be fruitless to protest to Governor Hamilton, who supposedly had nothing to do with it (17).

Interest in colonizing St. John may have been further discouraged in November 1717 when Governor Hamilton himself arrived in St. Thomas harbor aboard a British man-of-war during a circular tour of all the Virgin Islands. Hamilton used the occasion to reiterate to Bredal that the British would not tolerate even timber cutting on St. John by Danish subjects (18).

Meanwhile, unaware of Hamilton's intimidating visit, the Company Directors had written to Bredal reprimanding him for inactivity in connection with the occupation of St. John, and for his reluctance to protest to Hamilton over the attempted occupation of Crab Island. They ordered him "if possible" to send a ship to St. John with as many soldiers as could be spared from the St. Thomas garrison, some slaves and as many of the poor and "idle" inhabitants as could be impressed (19).

Since the Directors were fully aware that the colonization of St. John might provoke a British reprisal, they ordered Bredal to organize the expedition in secret to prevent the British from preemptive action. Once ashore, the landing party were to build "an advantageous post", which they were to "maintain with extreme effort" if attacked. If a British force appeared, the expedition's leader was to present them with a formal protest made out in advance by Bredal. The Company further ordered that a vessel should always be on hand in case the people of St. John needed to save themselves. For their part, the Directors would ask the King to bring a protest before the English Court against the occupation of Crab Island (20).

It would be incorrect to think that Bredal was pleased when he received the Company's instructions. He responded by warning the Directors that St. Thomas faced dangers enough without attempting the colonization of St. John. British good will was necessary to protect St. Thomas from the pirates that "swarmed" throughout Virgin Islands' waters. He reported that the Spanish had sent an army of 1500 men to expel the British from Crab Island, and he had information that after they had dealt with the English they intended to attack St. Thomas (21).

St. Thomas, Bredal pointed out, was a weak colony due to lack of manpower. Sickness had thinned the ranks of the garrison to such an extent that they could not muster more than thirty able men. If he occupied St. John, Bredal worried that St. Thomas would not only be exposed to external enemies, but to "ill-disposed men" residing there. In addition to manpower deficiencies, Bredal was concerned about logistics. He explained that St. Thomas had a shortage of foodstuffs and that the residents had to "work very hard just to produce enough food for the soldiers and ships" (22). Additional food would be needed to support the occupation of St. John. Moreover, the British might react by stopping the supply of food from "their countries", which would mean that they could starve St. Thomas within a month (23). For all of these reasons Bredal wanted to adhere to "our principle not to play with the island we have in safe possession because of another one which is less safe" (24).

Yet, despite his many misgivings, Bredal could not afford to ignore the Company's instructions to occupy St. John. Consequently, he set about organizing the colonizing expedition. His first concrete step was to purchase a boat and ten cannons (25). Provisions were acquired from a visiting ship (26). The next step was to define the privileges and duties of the planters. Finally, the Governor, five soldiers, twenty planters and sixteen Negroes went ashore at Coral Bay on March 25, 1718.

What happened after the landing is reported by Bredal (27):

I planted our most gracious King's flag and fired a salute. We feasted and drank the health of our most gracious King and then of the honorable Company....I chose a field for the Company's plantation at a distance of one gunshot from where the fortress is to be built....I have permitted the planters to indicate which pieces of ground they prefer.

The ceremonies over, Bredal and the planters returned to St. Thomas out of fear of the British, leaving it to the soldiers and slaves to get on with the practical and risky business of establishing a settlement. Everyone awaited the British response (28).

## The Foreign Reaction

The British reaction came a few weeks after the occupation. That it was so prompt was due to an English informant, John Phillips, on St. Thomas. Phillips sent a detailed letter to Governor Hamilton on March 29th, which the Governor presented to his Council on March 31st (29). It was immediately decided to send a ship under Captain Hume's command to St. Thomas to protest the occupation and to reiterate Britain's claim to St. John (30).

Captain Hume arrived in St. Thomas harbor aboard the HMS SCARBOROUGH on April 23rd. He had a personal interview with Governor Bredal, in which he presented a letter from Governor Hamilton demanding that the Danes should under no circumstances continue the colonization of St. John. Hamilton informed Bredal that he had no doubt that this demand would be met, as the Danes had uncertain claims, even to St. Thomas. If, however, the Danes refused to evacuate St. John, Hamilton would have to follow his orders to prevent the colonization (31).

Bredal rejected the British demands. He told Hume that he entertained no doubts about the legality of Denmark's claim to St. Thomas, and he insisted that the occupation of St. John was legal and justified by the fact that it was an unpopulated island that had been peacefully in Danish possession for many years (32). After hearing this response, Captain Hume sailed off, but not before threatening that the Danes would soon be driven out by force (33).

Despite Hume's threat, Governor Hamilton took no immediate action, except to send Bredal several "insolent" letters, which were answered with moderation (34). The British threats proved empty because Hamilton's orders to "obstruct and hinder them [the Danes] from proceeding" also restricted him from the use of power (35). This prohibition meant that his possibilities were exhausted once Bredal refused his demand to leave St. John. Unwilling to exceed his powers, Hamilton had to ask the Council of Trade and Plantations for further orders (36).

Apparently, the Council decided to restrain Hamilton, because no further British action occurred before 1722, when the warship HMS HECTOR anchored in St. Thomas to reassert Britain's claim to St. John (37). Once more Bredal rejected the demand, after which the British threatened that the Danes would lose St. Thomas if they persisted (38). Nothing further happened however, and a few days later the HECTOR sailed off quietly (39).

Why, after four years of silence, which had allowed the Danes to consolidate their colony on St. John and which implied tacit acceptance of its existence, did the British resume their protests? The answer might be that Governor Hart, who had replaced Hamilton in December 1721, wanted to demonstrate his abilities and authority. As soon as he arrived in the West Indies Hart inquired whether citizens of other nations had settled in those Virgin Islands within his province. He thus learned that the Danes had occupied St. John four years earlier. Since the HECTOR was already cruising the Virgin Islands in search of pirates, Hart "laid hold of the occasion to write to the Governor of St. Thomas for the King of Denmark to reclaim the Island of St. John" (40). But, Hart, like Hamilton, did not have orders to exercise extreme authority. Bredal suspected this, and so disregarded his protests (41).

Hart tried again in June 1724. He wrote Otto Jacob Thambsen, who had just succeeded Bredal as Governor, demanding that the Danes leave St. John (42). Hart's letter may be interpreted as a feeler to see if the new Danish Governor was less resolute and uncompromising than his predecessor. He got an answer within the month, when Thambsen sent a firm rejection (43). Nor did the Company show much concern with Hart's new demand

(44). The rejection prompted Hart to ask the Council of Trade and Plantations for allowance to drive the Danes out of St. John (45). The Council waited several months before informing Hart that an answer would arrive later (46). But nothing further happened, and no more is heard from the British during the period of our study.

It is clear that the British Governors of the Leeward Islands wanted very much to drive the Danes from St. John, and even St. Thomas. However, despite their appeals the Government in London did not want to resort to force. Its reluctance may be explained by its concern that from a global perspective St. John could hardly have been worth a conflict with Denmark.

The Spanish also repeatedly protested against the Danish occupation of St. John (47). The matter was brought to the attention of the Council of the Indies in Seville, which recommended to the King that the Danes be immediately driven out of both St. Thomas and St. John. The King approved of an expulsion from St. John, and in 1720 orders to this effect were sent to the West Indies (48). But the Viceroy did not react. A scout was despatched from Puerto Rico, but the Admiral of the West Indian fleet doubted an action. In the Spring of 1721 the King repeated his order, but once again it produced nothing concrete (49).

Spanish privateers did attack St. John in 1729 (50), but this action cannot be considered a direct response to the occupation of 1718. From St. Thomas complaints were frequently heard that Spanish privateering was a great annoyance (51), but this too cannot be considered a reaction, as Danish vessels were being seized for years prior to the occupation, and English vessels were also being taken (52).

Thus, while the local authorities in the British West Indies vainly pressed their Mother Country for permission to expel the Danes from St. John, their counterparts in the Spanish colonies twice ignored orders from Spain to attack St. John. Bearing this in mind it can be concluded that the Danish occupation of St. John was successful in large part because local and international factors combined to limit the foreign response.

### **The Choice of St. John**

It might be asked why the small, mountainous, relatively infertile island of St. John was preferred as an object of Danish colonization over Crab Island, which was larger, flatter and more arable. Several factors may have contributed to this choice.

First, many years of timber cutting on St. John undoubtedly made the Danes familiar with the resource potentials of that island. Secondly, geographical considerations were certainly important. Crab Island is located nearly thirty miles southwest of St. Thomas. During wartime and other periods of unrest it would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, to maintain communications with that island. Even in times of peace it would be hard to maintain connections without losses to the pirates that still infested the sea lanes between the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. Indeed, a colony on that remote island would have been a tempting target for pirates, who had previously shown themselves unafraid to attack even fully established colonies.

St. John, on the contrary, was situated only two miles from St. Thomas, making defense, logistical support and inter-island communication/ transportation far easier. Moreover, this proximity made it far more attractive to settlers and investors, who demanded protection from foreign aggression and slave unrest.

Thirdly, foreign policy considerations probably influenced the choice. Crab Island was close to Puerto Rico and fell into what might be called Spain's "intimate sphere". The Spanish would not even tolerate foreigners fishing in its waters. Certainly they could be expected to react violently to any settlement that might engage in illegal trade or menace the navigational routes of their armadas (53). They had driven an English settlement from the island during the 17th Century, and had brutally smashed another English effort in 1717. This latter expulsion had strongly impressed Bredal, who reported that those who had resisted the Spanish were "massacred", while the remainder were taken prisoner (54).

Thus, Danish authorities recognized that if they occupied Crab Island they would provoke both England and Spain. The situation was somewhat different with St. John, because there was some reason to believe that the Spanish had only marginal interests there. St. John was relatively distant from Puerto Rico, and St. Thomas stood between the two islands. Moreover, St. John had little economic potential for the Spanish, who had abundant arable land in the Greater Antilles, and abundant raw materials on the Continent. Thus, while the Danes rather expected a strong English reaction to the colonization of St. John, they hoped that the Spanish response would be less serious. It is therefore incorrect to speak about a "choice" between St. John and Crab Island, because from a geopolitical perspective only St. John offered a realistic alternative.

#### Strategic Motive: Fort Frederiksvaern

As soon as the Danes invaded St. John in 1718 they immediately set about constructing a defensive situation at Coral Bay (55). Governor Bredal chose to build a small fort on the top of a hill 133 meters high (the Fortsbjerg), which juts out into Coral Bay, dividing Coral Harbor on the west from Hurricane Hole on the east. From this strategic position the fort commanded all of Coral Bay. Since the fort was founded during the reign of Frederik IV, it was only natural to name it Frederiksvaern after the King whose interests it would defend among others.

Of course, foreign policy considerations were important in the foundation of this fort, but they were not decisive, as Frederiksvaern was never strong enough during our period to resist an attack by the English or Spanish. Its primary function was psychological rather than military. With respect to the outside world, it was intended to serve as a symbol that the island had been occupied and belonged to the Danish Crown. Domestically, it functioned as an assertion of political authority in what was basically an undisciplined frontier society.

The fort facilitated the colonization of St. John by reassuring apprehensive settlers that they would be protected from rebellious slaves as well as foreign aggressors. Slave unrest was commonplace in the islands (56), and a rebellion was dreaded by authorities and planters alike, as it threatened both their lives and property (57). The fort was intended to awe the slaves, and to provide a place of refuge in case awe gave way to anger. In addition, the fort served as an administrative center and a prison (58).

It is somewhat misleading to call the original Frederiksvaern a fort, because actually it was little more than a fieldwork. Gerard de Keulen depicted it on his map of circa 1719 (59) as a rather stout stone building, which he grandiosely termed a "citadel". In February 1720 Anders Sorensen Duus made another drawing (Figure 1), which, although more reliable than van Keulen's, also contains many inaccuracies (60). The best picture of the actual appearance of Frederiksvaern during this period comes from information found in the inventories of 1724, 1727 and 1733 (61).

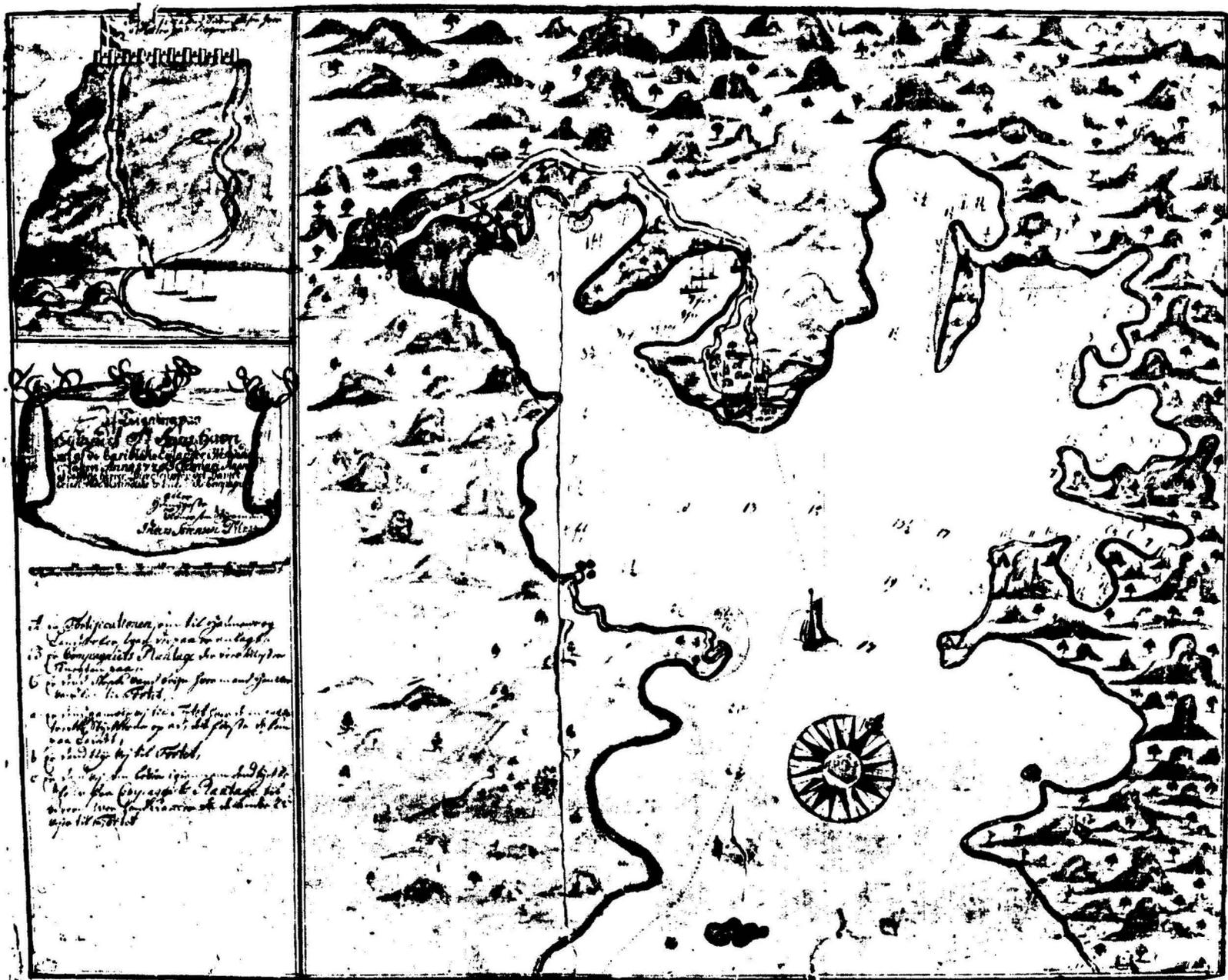


FIGURE 2 : ANDERS S. DUUS' DRAWING OF CORAL BAY IN 1720

According to the inventories the fort was situated with its length running east and west. It was surrounded by a parapet "gathered together of loose stone, sand and earth". The elaborate stone structure found on the site today, therefore, does not date from our period. According to Peter Oxholm it was built after the slave rebellion of 1733-1734, and then abandoned and dynamited in the 1760's when the Danes built a new battery and administrative center at Cruz Bay (62).

Inside the parapet there was a small house built of planks and "chips" (shingles?), where the lieutenant had his "lodgings". Next to it was a powder magazine with a flat brick roof, which was in good condition in 1724. There was a small barracks with two chambers, one for the non-commissioned officer and quartermaster, the other for the rest of the garrison. The barracks, which was constructed of planks covered with chips and planks, was hardly a pleasurable residence, for according to the 1724 inventory it "cannot be described in harsh enough terms". However, later inventories make no mention of any dilapidation.

Near the western end of the barracks, just inside the fort's gate, there was an uncovered fireplace surrounded by an "old" wall. In 1724 it was classified as being in bad condition. Outside the gate stood an "old" brick oven with its "battery" covered with sugar cane leaves. In 1733 these two structures were so deteriorated that they were said to have no value (63). Just below the oven was an "old" negro house, also covered in cane leaves, which was used as a "bouteillerie" or storehouse.

Anders Sorensen Duus' drawing shows five houses atop Fortsbjerg. One of them, the largest and most carefully drawn, is situated northeast of the others and flies the Dannebrog. It is probably the lieutenant's "lodging". The houses are placed within a clearly defined square, which is obviously the parapet. Duus' drawing raises two questions: Had he been at the fort? Had he drawn it accurately?

It is highly likely that Duus visited the fort, since he served in the West Indies aboard one of the Company's ships. It is, however, questionable that he drew Frederiksvaern accurately. He drew five houses, when the 1724 inventory mentions only three. But, the missing houses may have been demolished. His drawing is somewhat naive and out of proportion. And, he has the fort running in the wrong direction (64). These considerations diminish the value of his drawing to such an extent that nothing definitive can be gleaned from it alone. The drawing does however contain some written information, from which it can be learned that the garrison took its water from a locality just to the west of Coral Harbor, about 1700 feet from Frederiksvaern.

According to the inventories there was also a "water battery" on a small hill above the beach on the southeastern shoreline of Fortsbjerg. This battery is shown by van Keulen, but Duus omits it. It survives today in a ruinous condition. The battery, which was intended to protect the vulnerable southeast corner of Frederiskvaern from naval attack, was constructed of brick in the shape of a crescent. It had six cannons of three different calibers. Two 6 pounders stood at the eastern end covering the less important Hurricane Hole. Two 12 pounders stood in the middle pointing toward the open sea. On the western end two 8 pounders covered the entrance to Coral Harbor, where the main anchorage was located.

The fort and battery had a garrison of ten soldiers and one non-commissioned officer in 1727 (65). This modest force had been commanded by Lieutenant Peter Frohling since 1724 (66). In addition, there were two negro slaves: a drummer and a water carrier. In 1726 Governor Moth and Bookkeeper Gardelin informed the Company that ideally the garrison

should consist of a commander, three non-commissioned officers, a doctor, a clerk, a quartermaster and twenty-four soldiers (67). For comparison, Moth and Gardelin estimated that Fort Christianvaern on St. Thomas should have fifty soldiers. Even if their estimates were exaggerated, there is no doubt that Frederiksvaern was undermanned.

If the military force was inadequate, the state of the fort and its armament was even worse. According to the 1724 inventory the fort as a whole was "in a bad condition". The armament consisted of eleven 4 pound iron cannons, of which nine were "of no use" because their bases were rotten. There were also five 4 pounders, which are not mentioned in later inventories, and four swivel cannons. Fifteen flintlocks "for the men", together with eleven other usable and twelve unusable flintlocks, constituted the light armament.

The garrison had little ammunition to resist an enemy attack. They had nineteen "old" hand grenades, whose tubes were "of no use", seventy-six 4 pound balls, thirty-three 3 pound balls and five cudgels (68). There were two thousand flint bullets for the guns and some powder. As previously mentioned, the battery had six iron cannons. One of the 12 pounders was "rusty" and all of the carriages were characterized as being useless, except for "the carriage fabricated here", that belonged to the other 12 pounder. The ammunition store consisted of thirty-seven 12 pound balls, twenty-seven 8 pound balls, forty-seven 6 pound balls and twelve cudgels. An "old" 4 pound cannon without carriage was registered as lying on the road to the fort. It is mentioned in the 1727 inventory that balls were cast at both the fort and the battery.

While the 1724 inventory paints a very dismal picture respecting military preparedness on St. John, later inventories were not so gloomy, possibly because conditions had been improved, possibly because military men, who tended to be more critical than Company officials, were not so prominent in their preparation. Four of the five people who prepared the 1724 inventory were soldiers, while that of 1727 was made out by two civilians.

Still, it appears that during our period Frederiksvaern was never an imposing deterrent. Not even its strategic location could compensate for its small garrison, its almost total lack of usable heavy armament and its limited supply of ammunition. It might have been able to repel a pirate who ventured into Coral Bay, but it definitely was not equipped to offer meaningful resistance to an attack by the British or Spanish. On the other hand, the fort was reasonably well supplied with arms to resist internal disturbances, a fact which underscores the assumption that it was primarily intended for internal rather than external purposes.

Given these considerations it is necessary to reject Thorkild Hansen's assertion that in 1733 "Frederiksfort was a strong fortress, really the only one on the Danish islands which could be called almost impregnable" (69). More important, it must be concluded that Denmark's interest in St. John was not founded on strategic or military considerations. Rather, the motives for the colonization must be sought elsewhere.

#### **Economic Motive: Coral Bay Harbor**

Coral Bay is a spacious body of water on the east end of St. John. It is reasonably well protected from sea swells and the prevailing trade winds by a long, narrow, mountainous peninsula that curves outward into the Caribbean Sea from the northeast corner of the island. The lee side of this peninsula divides into a series of small bays, each of them providing excellent anchorages. Hansen's Bay on the northwest, Hurricane Hole to the North and Coral Harbor at the west are the most important of these secure anchorages. In

its totality Coral Bay provides one of the finest natural harbors in the Eastern Caribbean, a fact clearly appreciated by the Danes.

Governor Bredal, who elected to disembark his colonizing expedition at Coral Bay in 1718, called it "completely secure" and "as safe and beautiful as can be imagined" (70). Christian Marfeldt, a Danish economist who visited the islands in the 1760's, described its many attributes: it could hold four to six hundred ships; it provided easy landing places for many surrounding plantations; its "beautiful" Hurricane Hole could provide perfect security from storms for forty to fifty ships; it contained several excellent careening places (71). Peter Oxholm, a military engineer, wrote on his map of 1780 that "Coral Bay is one of the best in the West Indies...and it can hold a considerable number of warships" (72).

The Danes were not the only ones to appreciate the value of Coral Bay. In his efforts to secure permission to expel the Danes from St. John, Governor Hart of the British Leeward Islands claimed that the harbor's strategic advantages were comparable to those of Gibraltar. He maintained that it was not only the best harbor in the West Indies, but the only one apart from that of St. Thomas, that could be used en route from Antigua to Puerto Rico. Hart contended that homeward bound British vessels from the Leeward Islands needed a safe anchorage in case of bad weather or military dangers. He further argued that the Danes might use it to block Britain's trade with Jamaica (73). While Hart's assertions were certainly exaggerated, it is noteworthy that he chose to argue against a Danish possession of St. John on the basis of Coral Bay harbor, rather than because of the timber or agricultural potential of the island.

Nature had thus endowed St. John with a harbor of considerable advantages. It could have been made into a major naval facility as Oxholm mentioned, and as Governor Hart feared. But no naval base ever materialized because the Danes had not come to the West Indies for strategic purposes or to maintain a position as a world power. They had no need of a naval port in our period. Nor did the Company, whose sole purpose was profit, have funds to invest in a facility that would bring no economic gain. Moreover, it cannot be overlooked that the English would certainly have intervened if the Danes had tried to establish a naval base.

Coral Bay might also have supported an important trading center. Bredal seems to have this in mind when he thought of founding a town on the plain below the fort (74). Governor Suhm also proposed that a town be established at Coral Bay (75). But a town, much less a major seaport, never became a reality at Coral Bay.

During our period, and probably throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, Coral Bay was used by ships primarily for careening (76) and as a storm anchorage. For example, in 1730 the Directors ordered Governor Suhm to anchor two Company ships carefully in Hurricane Hole during the hurricane season (77). Ships engaged in the coastal trade between St. Thomas and St. John periodically put into Coral Bay to exchange plantation supplies for plantation products, but this traffic was too small to require an urban distribution center.

Three reasons can be adduced why the Danes failed to capitalize on the economic possibilities of such a natural harbor. First, plantation agriculture on St. John never became as important as had been hoped. At the outset of colonization Bredal seems to have imagined all of St. John planted with sugar, and in 1718 the planters lauded its soil (79). In 1724

Governor Moth suggested that the Company sell its Krum Bay plantation in St. Thomas, which had never been profitable, and send its slaves to the Company's plantation in St. John "where in due time two capable sugar works can be established [and] then the Company will see what beautiful profits that plantation will yield...." (80). As late as 1726 Moth was praising the productive capacity of St. John (81).

But this optimism proved short lived. It was soon discovered that much of the soil was unsuited to sugar cane cultivation (see below). In 1728 Governor Suhm informed the Company that the soil on its St. John plantation was bad because of the high content of saltpetre (82). Additional complaints of poor soil conditions followed (83), and in 1733 Governor Gardelin even suggested that the Company part with the plantation (84). A similar situation obtained on many other sugar plantations (85). Thus, St. John never proved the sugar adventure dreamed of, so one reason to invest in the development of its harbor disappeared.

Secondly, the harbor at St. Thomas was becoming a major maritime center during this period, but its potential was far from being realized. The merchants and planters of St. Thomas had little interest in promoting the development of a competing seaport at St. John, and they certainly would have resisted any such effort sponsored by other parties.

Finally, St. Croix was acquired only fifteen years after the occupation of St. John. This island presented far greater opportunities for the Company and for enterprising planters and merchants. The liquidity of the Company was tight, and the acquisition of St. Croix demanded not only the expense of new facilities, but loans to the new planters. The future lay with St. Croix, so interest in a seaport at St. John quickly faded. Thus, it was not the slave rebellion which forestalled the economic development of St. John, but competition from the rich cane fields of St. Croix.

In sum, the maritime prosperity of St. Thomas and the agricultural success of St. Croix deprived St. John from realizing her full economic potential.

### CHAPTER 3: ESTABLISHING THE COLONY

#### The Framework of Settlement

On March 24 1718, the day before the occupation of St. John, the colonial administration negotiated an agreement with the St. Thomas planters that defined the privileges and duties of the settlers who wanted to establish plantations in the new colony. This document established the general framework that governed the colonization of St. John during the period of our study (1).

The first privilege was seven years freedom from taxation. However, the planters had to pay a tax on exported plantation produce during the tax-free period. The planters did not gain this privilege without a struggle. Initially the colonial administration decided on four tax-free years, but the planters demanded eight years, as had been the case on St. Thomas (2). They compromised on seven years. The administration made this concession out of fear that the land hungry planters might have bypassed St. John and moved to other islands. They also wanted to encourage rapid colonization of St. John.

By insisting on the export tax Company officials sought not only direct revenue, but tried to ensure that produce from the new colony would go to the Company storehouse in St. Thomas as return cargo for its next ship. But, the tax only encouraged smuggling, a common problem, which various governors tried unsuccessfully to overcome. The second privilege allowed the planters to take as much wood and lime as they needed for plantation development. However, they could not export this material from the island.

As for the duties of the planters, the first was that a white man of St. Thomas should live full time on every plantation. If this obligation was not adhered to within three months after the plantation had been claimed, title would be forfeited. The planter did not have to be personally present. He could, and many did, hire an overseer to satisfy the requirement, but only on condition that the person selected had lived on St. Thomas for at least one year and took an oath of allegiance to the Danish King. The Company insisted on having one white person on each plantation so that the slaves could be properly supervised. Nonetheless, many planters seem to have disregarded the regulation.

The second duty was that a sugar work had to be constructed on the plantation within five years, on penalty of confiscation. This requirement indicates that Bredal envisioned all of St. John planted with sugar cane, as there was no provision for any other kind of cultivation. Cotton cultivation, which was very common on St. Thomas, was not mentioned (3).

#### The First Years of Settlement

Little information could be found concerning the situation on St. John during the first years of settlement. Available sources consist only of the Company's Account Book for 1718-1725, which actually ends in 1722, and short passages in the Governors' outgoing correspondence to the Company. The dearth of information about St. John in the Governor's letters was criticized by the Company (4).

Table 1, which presents annual Company expenditures on supplies for St. John between 1718 and 1722, provides some indication of the level of activity on the island.

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TABLE 1: ANNUAL COMPANY EXPENDITURES FOR  
SUPPLIES TO ST. JOHN 1718-1722

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YEAR	EXPENDITURE (Rigsdalers)
1718	\$ 1470
1719	\$ 593
1720	\$ 853
1721	\$ 2283
1722	\$ 1260

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SOURCE: RA, V-g-K, No. 792: Omkostskonto 1718-1725

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TABLE 2: PLANTATION FOUNDATIONS ON ST. JOHN 1718-1729

	1718	1719	1720	1721	1722	1723	1724	1725	1726	1727	1728	1729	UNKNOWN	SUM
Caneel Bay	8	1		1	1									11
Duurloo Bay	1			5				1					1	8
Cruz Bay			2	5		2	3	5	1	1				19
Reef Bay				9			1	1	2	1				14
Lamesure Kv.			2	1			6	3						12
Coral Bay	1							6	2	1	3	4	1	18
Franske Kv.							1	5	1	1		2		10
Maho Bay				6				2						8
SUM	10	1	4	27	1	2	11	23	6	4	3	6	2	100

SOURCE: RA, V-g-K, St. John Land List 1729

Comparing these figures with those relating to plantation foundations (Table 2), it can be seen that activity on St. John fell off for two years after the initial colonization, only to be revived by a new wave of settlement starting in 1721.

The supplies consisted primarily of construction material and foodstuffs transported from St. Thomas to the garrison and the Company plantation at Coral Bay. To help ease the need for food, corn and potatoes for the slaves were planted immediately after the slopes of Fortsbjerg had been cleared (5). Some turtle nets were also sent to St. John (6). Drinking water was also transported until sources of fresh water were located on the island (7).

Conditions of life were difficult at first. Until the first wood houses were built, the settlers lived in canvas tents, which exposed them to rainy weather. There were complaints about bad drinking water and mosquitoes, who "devoured" the settlers to such an extent that they looked "monstrous" (8). Work was hard due to the hot, damp climate, and the shortage of slave labor resulting from frequent desertions (9). Finally, the settlers lived in constant fear of an English punitive expedition.

Conditions on St. John were so terrible that the St. Thomas authorities even used the island as a kind of penal colony for social undesirables and incompetents. Bredal wrote that "in our humble opinion no one deserves better to be on St. John than Axel Dahl" a lower official who had irritated him (10). Two clerks who had fallen into disgrace were sent to St. John:

We had to send Edward Poulsen, our best scribe, to St. John because he had been drinking himself quite mad here....Harboe, who arrived on the ship ALETTE, is incapable of writing down a single line, even if dictated....He wrote everything so wrong that we also had to send him to St. John where they use him to read the church text to the residents on holidays (11).

One other example of deportation was found. Jens Hansen Grundt, a sergeant who had committed a crime on St. Thomas, was sentenced to banishment on St. John (12). The frequency of such sentences cannot be determined from available documentation.

By 1721 the first results of the colonization had become noticeable. In the spring Bredal reported that the Company's "plantation on St. John is improving" (13). A few months later Thomas Bordeaux supplied it with a sugar work, three copper boiling kettles and six donkeys (14). Bredal also reported that "things had progressed so far that...Jacob van Stell has been offered 800 rigsdalers for this year's cotton crop, which he refused; and Pieter Duurloo has improved his plantation to such an extent that it has been valued at 1000 rigsdalers" (15).

Thus, it can be said that by 1721 the "establishment period" had almost been concluded, as the first plantations had begun to produce harvests and realize some income.

### The Plantation System: External Framework 1718-1733

In order to measure the pace of colonization on St. John it is necessary to consider both the external and internal frames of plantation development. By "external frame" is meant the parcelling out of the island into plantations; while "internal frame" refers to the establishment of economic activity on individual plantations. This distinction is necessary because in itself parcelling out is no guarantee that an actual settlement occurred. For colonization to take place another dimension must be added, namely the "internal frame", which consists of occupation, land clearance, cultivation and the processing of harvested crops.

The external development of the plantation system can be followed reasonably well from start to finish from information found in the Land Lists. They state when a land certificate was issued for each plantation, when the parcel was claimed and when the tax free period expired. But this exercise is not without problems. The question arises which of the three entries in the Land Lists should be used to determine the date of plantation foundation. Normally the date of the land certificate would be preferred, as this was the key legal document. However, not all plantations received land certificates; or, at least, not all land certificates were recorded in the Land Lists. Moreover, many land certificates were issued after the plantation had been claimed (16).

This leaves us with the date of claim, which is the date Company officials used for establishing when the tax free period began. This choice is not without its problems because the 1728 and 1729 Land Lists give different dates of claim. I have elected to use the dates given in the 1729 Land List because it is complete and its dates are replicated by all subsequent Land Lists.

As shown by Table 2, the filling out of the external framework of colonization began in 1718 with the foundation of ten plantations (17). The Company took up the large plain west of Fortsbjerg. A single plantation was established at Duurloo Bay (now Caneel Bay). Otherwise, interest was directed toward Caneel Bay Quarter (around Cinnamon and Maho Bays) on the north side of St. John, where eight plantations were founded. Only three other plantations were established in this quarter before it was completely taken up by 1722. Thus, Professor Dookhan is not entirely correct when he states that the Danish colonization began at Coral Bay under the protection of the fort (18).

Since the first planters did not settle around the fort, it can be concluded that defense considerations did not determine the situation of the plantations. The planters knew what little protection they could expect from the fort, and they wanted to locate their plantations on land best suited for the cultivation of sugar cane, which was along the north side of the island.

That sugar cane cultivation was preferred to cotton growing is shown by the fact that the sugar quarters (those where over half the plantations cultivated sugar cane) were taken up first. Caneel Bay Quarter was taken up almost immediately. When land was no longer available there interest shifted to Duurloo Bay (19) and Maho Bay (20). These three quarters had been almost entirely taken up by 1721.

The last quarters to be taken up were Coral Bay and the French Quarter (East End), which were the principal cotton districts. The taking up of the cotton quarters began in 1724, three years after most northside land had been claimed. Between 1721 and 1724 land marginally suited to sugar growing was taken up on the southside and west end of St. John. Apparently the planters preferred to take up plantation grounds in areas where there was some chance of sugar cultivation, rather than claiming land suited to other crops. Thus,

sugar cultivation was tried briefly on several plantations before their owners turned to other crops. Lamesure Quarter in the southeast section of the island provides an example of this tendency. Here half of the plantations cultivated sugar in 1728; but by 1730 most of these had abandoned sugar in favor of cotton or other crops (vide Table 7).

Table 2 shows that most plantation foundations occurred in three waves: one in 1718, one in 1721 and the last in 1724-25. Between these waves plantation foundations were modest, less than six per year. The reasons behind such a noticeable pattern must be looked for on St. Thomas. No data has been found that can explain the wave of 1718. But it seems likely that some of the planters who proposed the colonization in 1715 were involved. Nothing is mentioned about soil exhaustion on St. Thomas as a factor, even though this consideration had stimulated the initial interest in St. John. Perhaps this is because two good years followed after the severe drought of 1715 (21).

By the early 1720's however, soil exhaustion had once again become noticeable, which partly explains the wave of 1721. Bredal observed in the summer of 1721 that St. Thomas "becomes obsolete and worsens every day" (22). In connection with a possible English attack, he commented: "it would hurt the Danish colony [of St. Thomas] severely if St. John were lost to it, as some plots here are already so bad that nothing will grow thereon and in some time will become so bad that they will have to be abandoned" (23). In July 1722 Bredal explicitly stated that four planters had recently taken up land in St. John because their lots on St. Thomas had deteriorated (24).

Soil exhaustion, however, represents only part of the explanation for the wave of 1721. Another factor was the severe drought that commenced in 1719 and lasted, with only occasional rain, until 1723 (25). This drought aggravated the soil exhaustion, prompting marginal planters on St. Thomas to look elsewhere for relief.

Nothing explicit has been found in the sources to explain the last wave of plantation foundations that began in 1724. Deteriorating agricultural conditions certainly played a part, but there is also evidence that the sugar crop was good in 1724 (26). This was followed by the onset of a new drought in starting in the summer of 1724 and lasting through 1725 (27).

In Spring 1726 Governor Moth wrote: "St. John is now so populated that no lots are left, except in the vicinity of the fortress and the Company plantation." He suggested parcelling out some of the land belonging to the Company's plantation, leaving "for the honorable Company enough of the best and easiest land that [could be managed] by two or three capable sugar works" (28). The Company agreed to this proposal (29), thereby allowing more planters, most of whom were Company employees, to take up new plantations on St. John. The external framework of colonization thus ends in 1729, when the last plantation to be granted by the Company was taken up.

#### **The Plantation System: Internal Framework 1718-1733**

While it is possible to follow the external framework of colonization fairly closely, it is quite different with respect to the internal framework. Due to the nature of the source material little can be known about the beginnings of economic activity on individual plantations. The Governors' reports say very little about the general situation of the plantation system on St. John and next to nothing about individual plantations. The Land Lists, which start in 1728, provide the first meaningful site specific information.

Through the Governors' correspondence and various inventories we can get a fairly good picture of the situation on the Company's plantation at Coral Bay. However, the Company plantation is not so helpful from a general perspective, as it was atypical in several ways. First, its size (approximately one thousand acres), was considerably larger than average. Secondly, its soil seems to have been relatively poor. Thirdly, there was a large, well capitalized, organization behind it.

As mentioned above, the production of sugar and cotton had begun on some other plantations by 1721. A year later it was noted that Cornelius Delicat was the only planter, apart from the Company, who had a sugar work (30). By 1726 the number of sugar works had reached "almost 20", some of which were still under construction (31). In 1730 there were 22 sugar works (Table 7), which meant that most had been constructed before 1727. In 1730 there were still eight sugar plantations where no work had been built. There were also three cotton works and two Killdevil (rum) works. Plantation development during the 1720's significantly diminished St. John's forest. It was reported in 1728 that no large timber remained, although plenty of small trees still survived (32).

Had the internal frames been filled in prior to the slave rebellion of 1733? Probably not, although a conclusive answer is not possible from existing documentation. By 1733 all of the sugar plantations appear to have been brought under cultivation. Most northside, southside and west end plantations had slave laborers, although their numbers were small in many cases. However, in Coral Bay and French Quarters, the last to be taken up, there were still plantations that had not been measured, and the number of slaves on most plantations was quite small. Indeed, a few plantations had no slaves.

The number of slaves provides the best indicator of plantation development during our period. The Land List of 1728, which provides the first census of slaves on St. John, enumerates a total of 806 slaves. By 1733 the slave population had grown by 50%, to 1255 (Table 3). These figures suggest a strong growth rate for the plantations during the last years covered by this study. Nevertheless, the shortage of slave laborers for plantation development was a continuous complaint throughout our period (33), and there is reason to believe that in 1733 no plantation was yet fully cultivated.

In 1727 Governor Moth sent the Company a letter which provides some information regarding the number of slaves need to bring a sugar plantation into full production. In recommending that the Company parcel out land belonging to its St. John plantation, Moth provided estimates showing that 100 slaves and 1 complete sugar work were required to cultivate 146 acres of cane (34). There are many reasons to believe that this estimate was reliable. Moth was an experienced planter, who owned several large plantations on St. Thomas and St. John. Moreover, he claimed that several other prominent planters stood behind his figures (35). Finally, in a subsequent letter, Governor Suhm used comparable figures (36).

If valid, Moth's estimate indicates that in 1733 St. John plantations were still underdeveloped, for according to the figures presented in the 1733 Land List nearly all fell well short of a ratio of 1 slave for every 1.5 acres. An inventory showed that the Company plantation had 110 slaves in 1733, but it contained approximately one thousand acres (37). While there is reason to suspect that the number of slaves shown in the Land Lists was low, the figures were probably not too far off the mark.

In sum, the general impression from available evidence is that while considerable agricultural development had taken place throughout the island by 1733, there was still substantial room for internal expansion on most St. John plantations.

TABLE 3: SLAVES ON ST. JOHN, 1728 AND 1733

	Men	Women	Bosals	Maquerons	Adolescents	Children	SUM
Caneel Bay Q.	74	32	11	18		2	137
Duurloo Bay Q.	59	23	0	18		0	100
Cruz Bay Q.	47	25	9	13		8	102
Reef Bay Q.	62	21	11	11		3	108
Lamesure Q.	53	20	14	10		9	106
Coral Bay Q.	37	7	44	5		13	132
French Q.	14	6	9	7		1	37
Maho Bay Q.	33	19	5	10		17	84
SUM + 26 <sup>+</sup>	379	153	103	92		53	806
Westergaard <sup>++</sup>	563		-	84		30	677

1728

Caneel Bay Q.	136		4	33	7	29	209
Duurloo Bay Q.	124		8	28	15	27	202
Cruz Bay Q.	121 <sup>+++</sup>		7	10	10	54	202
Reef Bay Q.	80		8	12 <sup>++++</sup>	4	23	127
Lamesure Q.	82		4	16	8	12	122
Coral Bay Q.	137		4	6	3	34	184
French Q.	58		3	9	1	14	85
Maho Bay Q.	70		1	18	12	23	124
SUM	808		39	132	60	216	1255
Westergaard <sup>++</sup>	731		-	119	-	237	1087
Balance	77		39	13	60	78	168

1733

SOURCE: RA, V-g-K, St. John Land Lists 1728, 1733.

BOSALS: Newly arrived Africans, who were not taxed during their first year.

MAQUERONS: Slaves incapable of working, who were not taxed.

ADOLESCENTS: Slaves age 12 to 16 years, who were not taxed.

+ Some of the Company's slaves, of whom 16 were unspecified and 10 were on St. Thomas. The source for this figure is an inventory in V-g-K, No. 523.

++ Westergaard (1917), Appendix I, p. 319.

+++ Includes "three without sufficient information".

++++ Includes one mulatto girl.

## CHAPTER 4: ST. JOHN PLANTATIONS

### Plantation Position

West Indian plantations were usually organized in accordance with a fairly general pattern (1). Access to the sea was one of the main criteria, since this cut down transportation time and expense. Consequently, the coastal regions were the first to be taken up. This preference was decisive in shaping plantation contours: most were rectangular, with a narrow side fronting the sea.

For several reasons it was further advantageous to have a coastal plantation on the leeward side of the island. First, the plantations became less vulnerable to raids by naval vessel, privateers or pirates, which had to tack against the wind to get inshore. Secondly, it was easy for heavy laden vessels to leave the coast. Thirdly, droghers were not exposed to heavy wind and waves.

How does St. John match this general pattern? The prevailing wind off St. John blows from the northeast, becoming easterly during the summer. This means that St. John has its narrow side facing the wind during most of the year, allowing sailing ships relatively easy access to most of the shoreline. The prevailing winds also made it easy for ships leaving St. John to get to St. Thomas.

The coast of St. John is indented by many small bays, nearly all of which provide excellent landing places. This is especially the case on the north coast, where, for instance, Trunk Bay has deep water and sandy ground right up to the beach. There are some places that do not possess these qualities, such as Reef Bay on the south coast, where a large reef blocks access to nearly all the shoreline. The coastline between Leinster Bay and New Found Bay is also rich in rocks and reefs. Generally speaking, however, much of St. John can be easily accessed by boat.

The direction of the trade winds and the abundant landing places favored a coastal traffic along St. John, and there is ample evidence that such occurred, primarily in small vessels (droghers). Naturally, this maritime commerce was concerned primarily with the transportation of plantation goods (2), but there was also considerable smuggling (3).

Despite these advantages, the coastal areas were not always taken up first on St. John. In Cruz Bay Quarter, for example, two inland plantations were taken up in 1720, although seaside plots were still available. This pattern can also be seen at Reef Bay, Lamesure and Coral Bay Quarters. In contrast, the seaside locations were the first to be taken up at Maho Bay Quarter. In cases where inland plantations were taken up first, the planters must have given priority to the quality of soil, terrain and rainfall.

Nor was the principle of turning the narrow side of the plantation to the sea always followed on St. John. Of thirty-nine plantations described in the Land Lists as bordering on the sea, only seventeen turned their narrow side seaward. Of the remainder, ten had their long side fronting the sea, while there are differences of interpretation for twelve others (4). One must conclude, then, that St. John does not easily conform with the regional pattern, as only one element, the coastal traffic, has been ascertained.

We do not know much about the actual location of the St. John plantations, as no map shows the plantation boundaries. The Land Lists do provide written descriptions of plantation boundaries, but these are often vague, and have little value without a map. It is impossible even to define the quarterlines.

It is possible to discern the general geometric shape of most plantations from the Land Lists, which usually give their measurements in length and width. The St. John plantations were far from dead straight with uniform borders. One meets rectangles, squares and parallelograms, some adjacent to one another, some perpendicular (5). There were even a few trapezoid and triangular parcels (6). The coastal plantations were particularly irregular because of points and bays which seemingly caused measuring difficulties. The widths of some of these plantations were said to be "uncertain as it runs in and out" (7). Many headlands were not included in the plantation measurements. Finally, the plantations differed in their overall size. In short, unlike the uniform pattern found on St. Croix, St. John was a puzzle of different geometric shapes.

### Plantation Measurement

When a planter decided to take up a plantation on St. John his claim was registered (8). As on St. Thomas the planters did not have to pay the Company for their land. Once a plantation had been registered, the Governor usually ordered some planters of St. Thomas, generally four, to go to St. John to measure its boundaries. Neighbors were requested to be present at the measuring to ensure that none of their land was taken, and to certify the measurement by oath (9). After the plantation had been measured "barricades" were planted to define the boundaries and a "certificate of land measure" was issued. These certificates of measurement differed from the "land certificates", which were generally issued relatively long after the measurement; although sometimes the measuring was done in accordance with a land certificate (10). The cost of measuring a plantation was borne by the new owner (11).

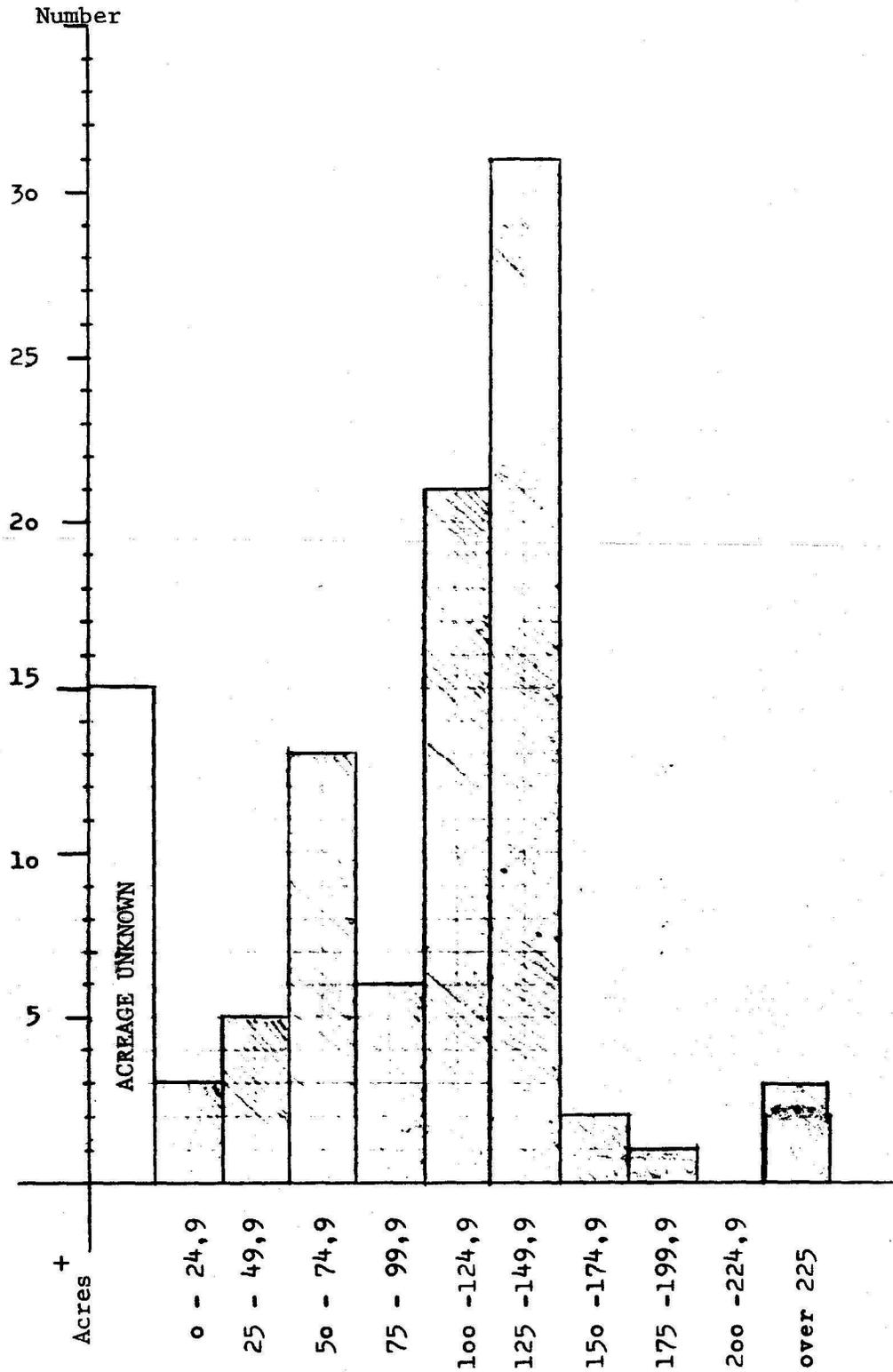
These procedures caused many disputes about plantation boundaries (12), which sometimes ended with a new measurement (13). Land certificates were sometimes issued without regard to previously established boundaries. For example, planter Isaac Constantin had to take a plantation on St. John after the measurement of neighboring plantations so reduced his lot on St. Thomas that he could no longer live on it (14). Responsibility for this recurring problem lay with the colonial administration, which does not appear to have been very diligent in accurately determining the boundaries of its land grants. Also, there is some question whether all neighbors participated in the measuring, or that those who did were always honest about their own "barricades". Obviously the authorities placed very little credence in the "certificates of measurement", which they considered less important than the land certificates.

### Plantation Size

The size of the plantation was important. West Indian planters recognized that there was an optimum size which could not be profitably exceeded. Several criteria determined this limit (15).

The first factor was transportation of the sugar cane to the mill. This time consuming process was accomplished either by donkeys, animal drawn carts, or slave labor. To prevent the canes from spoiling they had to be ground and the juice boiled within twenty-four hours after cutting. This time constraint meant that the fields could not be too far from the sugar work. Ideally the production complex should be situated near the center of the plantation. Often, however, the nature of the terrain dictated a less than ideal placement.

TABLE 4: NUMBER AND ACREAGE OF ST. JOHN PLANTATIONS IN 1730



SOURCE: RA, V-g-K, St. John Land List of 1730

+ The total acreage of all 85 plantations amounted to 9889.5 acres, or roughly 80% of the entire island.

A second limiting factor was the capacity of the sugar work. Water and wind mills could grind more sugar than animal mills, but they were more expensive to operate, and less reliable. A water mill, for example, could grind fifty cartloads of sugar cane per twenty-four hours, compared to just twenty-five to thirty-five cartloads per day for an animal mill.

The size of the labor force constituted a third factor. It was generally estimated that two slaves were needed for every 2-3 acres under cultivation. West Indian planters believed that no matter where the sugar work was situated, it could not serve a plantation of more than 300 to 350 slaves, or an area of more than 300 acres. Even on big islands such as Jamaica and St. Dominque a 300 acre plantation was considered large.

The Land List of 1730 has been used to determine the actual size of the St. John plantations. It was chosen because all the land had been parcelled out to the plantations by that date, and it provides the most detailed information about plantation size.

According to the Land List, in 1730 St. John had a total of 100 plantations. Of this number the approximate size of 85 can be determined. It can be seen from Table 4 that three sizes predominated to such an extent that they can be considered standard. The most frequent plantation size was 146 acres, followed by 109.5 acres and then 73 acres (16). Most of the remaining plantations were smaller than 73 acres. The smallest parcel, belonging to Jannitie Reins in Cruz Bay Quarter, amounted to just 6.5 acres. At the opposite end of the scale were a handful of larger plantations. One of these, totalling approximately 1000 acres, belonged to the Company. In Maho Bay Quarter there was one of 293 acres belonging to Christopher Gottschalk and another of 462 acres owned by William Vessup.

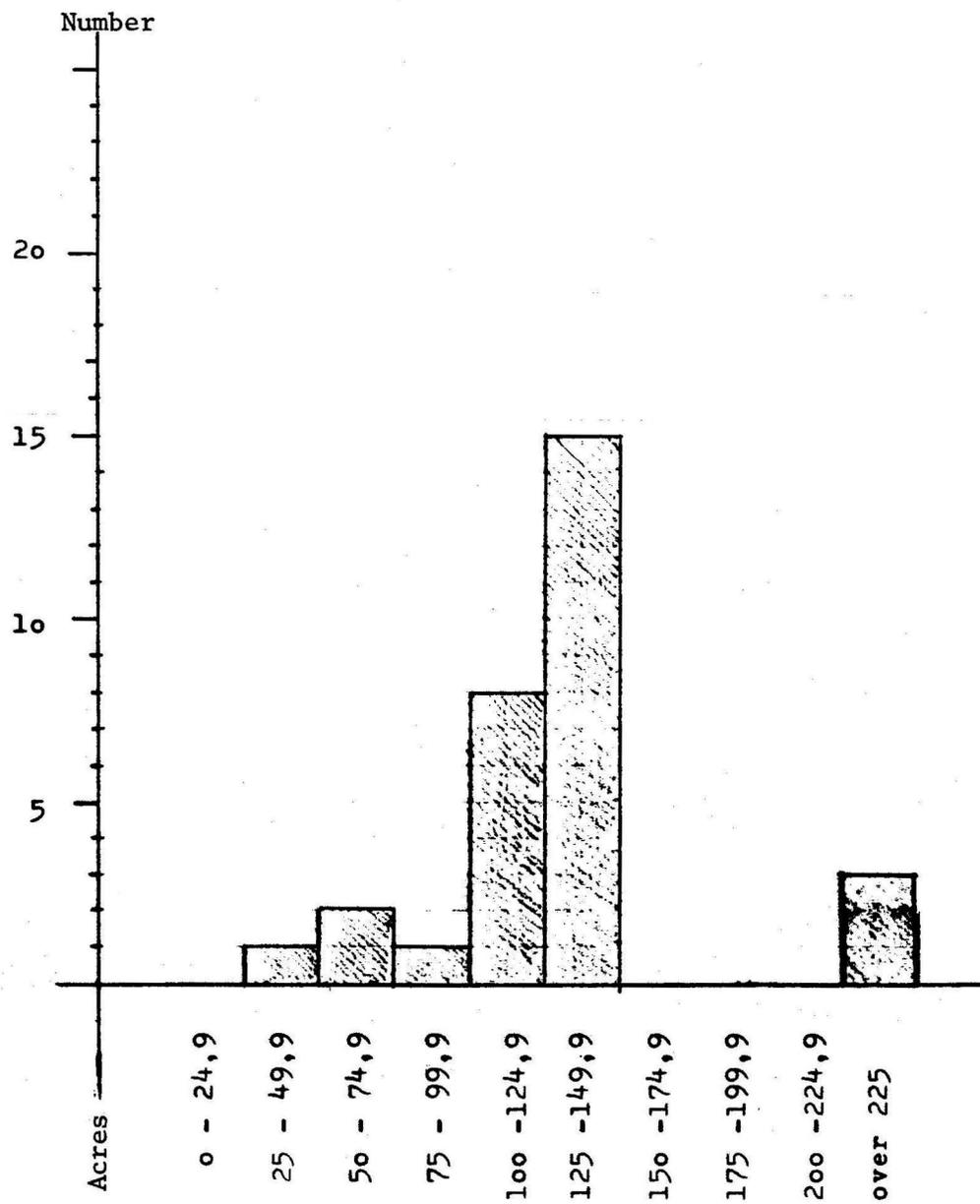
As shown by Table 5, most of the 146 acre plantations cultivated sugar, this being exactly the right size for a sugar work on St. John according to Governor Moth (17). Overall, St. John sugar plantations had an average size of 147 acres. But this figure is artificially inflated by the inclusion of two or three exceptionally large plantations. Table 5 shows that most of the sugar plantations were between 100 and 150 acres in size. By contrast, St. John cotton plantations averaged 85 acres, but most also fell into the 100-150 acre range (Table 6).

### Cultivation

Plantation cultivation by quarter in 1728 and 1730 is shown in Table 7. Sugar and cotton were clearly the main crops. Sticking to these two categories it can be seen that there were 32 sugar and 50 cotton plantations in 1728, while in 1730 these figures stood at 30 and 58 respectively. This data indicates a trend away from sugar cultivation toward cotton production. But the fact that cotton plantations were nearly twice as numerous as sugar plantations in 1730 does not necessarily mean that they occupied twice as much land, or even more land.

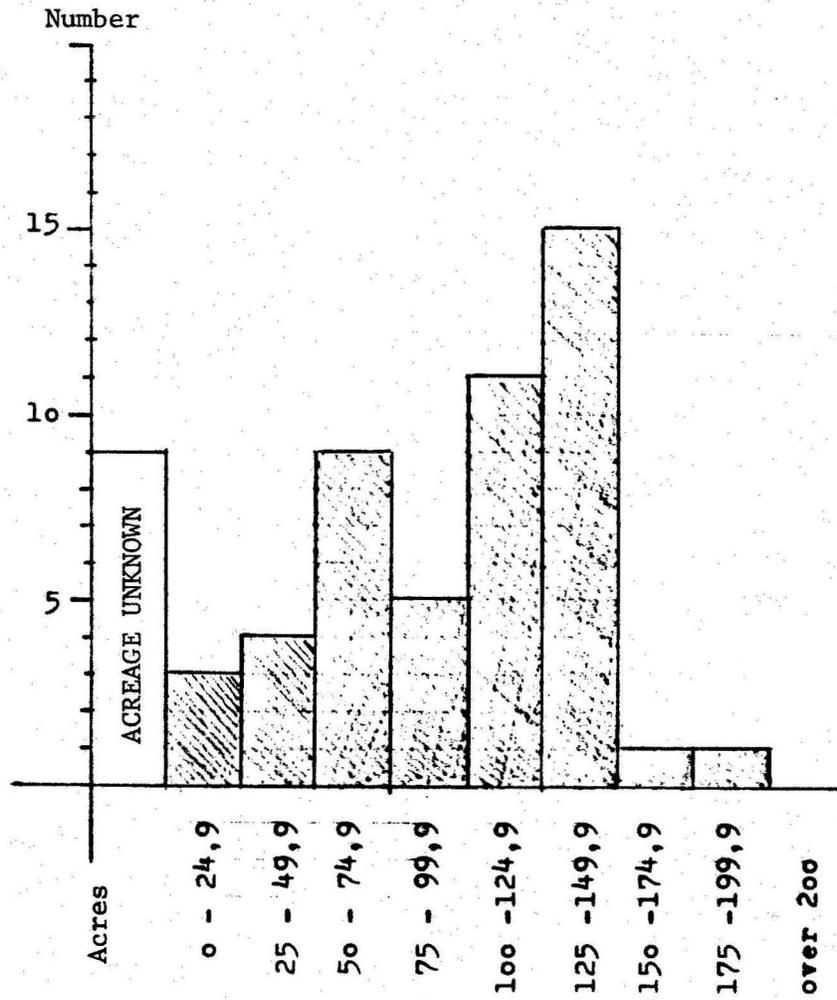
To get a more accurate picture of the general trend it is necessary to determine the total acreage held by the cotton and sugar plantations, and to compare these figures over a longer period. This exercise is not without its difficulties because the Land Lists do not give acreage figures, but only the measurement of individual plantations. Moreover, measurement figures for some plantations are incomplete. Finally, the cultivation of some

TABLE 5: NUMBER AND ACREAGE OF ST. JOHN SUGAR PLANTATIONS IN 1730



SOURCE: RA, V-g-K, St. John Land List of 1730.

TABLE 6: NUMBER AND ACREAGE OF ST. JOHN COTTON PLANTATIONS 1730



SOURCE: RA, V-g-K, St. John Land List of 1730

TABLE 7: PLANTATION CULTIVATION ON ST. JOHN 1728 AND 1730

	Sugar	Cotton	Mixed	Nothing	Unknown	SUM
Caneel Bay Q.	7	2	1	o	1	11
Duurloo Bay Q.	4	2	o	o	2	8
Cruz Bay Q.	4	11	1	o	o	16
Reef Bay Q.	5	1o	2	o	o	17
Lamesure Q.	6	6	o	o	o	12
Coral Bay Q.	1	7	o	1	o	9
French Q.	o	9	o	1	o	1o
Maho Bay Q.	5	3	o	o	o	8
SUM	32	5o	4	2	3	91
Westergaard <sup>+</sup>	29	48	9	-	-	87

1728

Caneel Bay Q.	9 <sup>++</sup>	1	1	o	o	11
Duurloo Bay Q.	5	2	o	o	1	8
Cruz Bay Q.	2	15 <sup>+++</sup>	1	o	1	19
Reef Bay Q.	4	8	1	o	1	14
Lamesure Q.	4	8	o	o	o	12
Coral Bay Q.	1	12 <sup>++</sup>	o	o	o	13
French Q.	o	9	o	1	4	14
Maho Bay Q.	5	3	o	o	1	9
SUM	3o	58	3	1	8	1oo

1730

	Sugar works	Cotton works	Killdevil works
Caneel Bay Q.	5	o	o
Duurloo Bay Q.	5	2	o
Cruz Bay Q.	1	1	1
Reef Bay Q.	3	o	o
Lamesure Q.	3	o	o
Coral Bay Q.	2 <sup>+++</sup>	o	1
French Q.	o	o	o
Maho Bay Q.	4	o	o
SUM	23	3	2

1730

SOURCE: RA, V-g-K, St. John Land Lists of 1728 and 1730

+ Westergaard (1917), Appendix I, p. 319. Westergaard has no figures for 1730.

++ Of these, No. 8 is taken from the Land List of 1731, as were Nos. 69 and 74 Coral Bay.

+++ No. 38 has been taken from the Land List of 1728.

++++ Includes a sugar works on the Company plantation which is not shown in the Land List.

Returning to the data in Table 8, and comparing it with that in Table 2, we can get a pretty good idea of the cultivation pattern between 1718 and 1739. The areas suitable for sugar cultivation were the first to be taken up. As the sugar quarters became fully occupied around 1722 planters had to be grateful for a cotton plantation, which accounts for their increasing numbers during the last half of the 1720's. The decline in sugar plantations and overall sugar acreage after 1728 can be explained by the fact that plantations marginally suited to sugar cultivation shifted to cotton production. This squares with the fact that the districts where the decline took place, like Cruz Bay and Reef Bay quarters, were typical cotton quarters. Despite the numerical advantage of the cotton plantations in 1730, sugar cultivation appears to have predominated up to that date. However, during the 1730's the total acreage of the cotton plantations came to supercede that of the sugar plantations, indicating that cotton cultivation had indeed become predominant.

Can these conclusions be overturned by gaps in the data? The 1728 findings seem to be reasonably secure. In that year the sugar plantations aggregated 1200 more acres than the cotton plantations. This figure does not take into account seven cotton plantations of unknown size and three plantations, aggregating 255 acres of unknown cultivation. Still, even assuming that all ten plantations were cotton plantations, it is unlikely that their total acreage could make up the deficit, since cotton plantations averaged only 85 acres each. Moreover, one sugar plantation of unknown acreage has been excluded from the sugar totals.

Less reliance can be placed on the 1730 figures, since they exclude nine cotton plantations of unknown acreage and eight plantations of unknown cultivation. It is probable that few, if any, of the latter category cultivated sugar, since the Land Lists tended to note the sugar plantations. Hence it is possible that aggregate land on the cotton plantations exceeded that on the sugar plantations as early as 1730.

The conclusions evident from the 1739 figures seem secure. In that year cotton plantations aggregated 746 more acres than sugar plantations. Excluded from this calculation are ten plantations of unknown cultivation. The acreage of eight of these amounts to 1051. Assuming that all eight happened to be sugar plantations, sugar plantations would hold 305 more acres than cotton plantations. However, such an assumption is unreasonable, as half of the ten plantations (aggregating at least 444 acres) were situated in typical cotton quarters, indicating that at least some cultivated cotton. Moreover, there is a "reserve" of sixteen cotton plantations of unknown acreage that has also been excluded from the totals. It seems, therefore, that the predominance of cotton cultivation may actually have been greater in 1739 than the figures indicate.

## CHAPTER 5: THE PLANTERS OF ST. JOHN

### The Company's Population Policy

The Company had a deliberate population policy for the settlement of St. John. It tried to restrict admission to the island, and it clearly had certain preferences as to whom it wanted to grant plantations.

plantations is not denoted in the Land Lists. Nonetheless, it has been possible to determine the acreage and cultivation of most plantations in the 1728 and 1730 Land Lists. Similiar data has been compiled from the 1739 Land List so that cultivation trends can be traced through the 1730's. Table 8 presents the results of this exercise.

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TABLE 8: CULTIVATION TRENDS, ST. JOHN 1728-1739

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	1728	1730	1739
Total Acreage on () Sugar Plantations	5683 (31)	5428 (30)	4272 (25)
Total Acreage on () Cotton Plantations	4410 (43)	4943 (49)	5018 (57)
Total Acreage on () Other Plantations	714 (06)	371 (04)	299 (02)
Unknown Culivation	255 (03)	73 (08)	1051 (10)
Sugar Plantations of Unknown Acreage	(01)	(00)	(00)
Cotton Plantations of Unknown Acreage	(07)	(09)	(16)

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SOURCE: RA, V-g-K, St. John Land Lists of 1728, 1730, 1739.

Some data from the 1738 Land List has been incorporated into the 1739 figures.

() denotes number of plantations counted.

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Before discussing this data two points must be noted. First, it should be stressed that the figures express total acreage and not cultivated acreage. The latter would, of course, have been more informative, but such information does not exist for this period. The cultivated acreage was always smaller than the total acreage since land was also used for residences, processing facilities, pasturage, provision grounds and roads. Moreover, much land was unsuited to cultivation.

The second point is that the acreage sugar plantation acreage includes that belonging to the Company plantation in Coral Bay. Its exact size is unknown, but it can reasonably be estimated at one thousand acres. According to an inventory only 195 acres of this plantation was cleared in 1728 (18), which emphasizes the vast disparity in this period between total acreage and cultivated acreage.

Planters from other West Indian islands were not encouraged to settle on St. John, as had been the case at St. Thomas, and later St. Croix. Rather, the Company aimed at recruiting only Danish "citizens" of St. Thomas (1). In this context the term "citizen" covers not only people of Denmark, but also other nationalities who had sworn an oath of allegiance to the Danish King (2). That Danish citizens of St. Thomas were preferred is shown quite clearly in the Company's pre-colonization agreement, which stated that no plantation on St. John should be taken up unless a white person from St. Thomas was placed on it (3). One reason for this insistence on people from St. Thomas may have been that St. John was being colonized in part to help alleviate problems confronted by St. Thomas planters. Additionally, the Danish administrators were undoubtedly concerned that opening up the colonization to other nationalities would bring in too many Englishmen, thus creating problems of control.

The Company also encouraged certain types of people from St. Thomas to emigrate to St. John. To begin with it ordered Bredal to send as many poor and idle people to St. John as possible (4). However, Bredal recognized that the colonization required people with investment capital, rather than those with little or nothing. In 1721 he wrote to the Company:

When newly arrived colonists are taken for the planting of such a colony they are poor people and the honorable Company is obliged to give them credit, as it is impossible for them to get along without three negroes, and this immediately demands 300-600 rigsdalers. Those people who enjoy such credit, and have nothing themselves, are not capable of establishing a sugar work in 20 or even 30 years.

Bredal was further concerned that the slaves purchased by such creditors might be worked to death. He therefore wanted to recruit rich people, and the Company agreed with his approach (5).

A national preference also influenced Company population policy. The Directors wanted to have St. John "mostly cultivated by people of the Danish nation" because "they show us on St. Thomas that one may be more sure of one's own". The Company sought to achieve this result by granting plantations to families sent from Denmark. The Directors felt that these people could be assisted without great costs (6).

Thirdly, the Company wanted to promote settlement by white families. The Directors wrote to Bredal in 1722 that "some citizens of St. Thomas should have preference over others; for instance, if - apart from being native Danes and consequently belonging to the Lutheran religion - they have children or relatives whom they want to put on the plantations, so that the island is thus populated with whites" (7). This statement also indicates a religious preference.

A decade after the colonization commenced the Company still adhered to its population policy. When, in 1727, the Directors agreed to parcel out some of the land belonging to the Company plantation, they wrote that priority should be given "to the very deserving of the Company's servants or citizens who can best put them in order...with preference for our own nation and religion, and it would please us that Moth and Gardelin, more than others, be given plantations to their pleasure" (8).

Were the Company's preferences fulfilled? With respect to the economic consideration, several rich planters from St. Thomas did acquire plantations on St. John (9). But there were also many less affluent plantation owners.

The Company was less successful in populating St. John with Danes, for only about 25% of the plantation owners were of Danish descent (Table 9). Some planters did send relatives to St. John (10), but, in fact, the Land Lists show that only a few families, such as the von Stells, the Von Beverhoudts and the Runnels, settled on the plantations. Relatively few whites settled on St. John during our period, there being only 157 in 1733 (Table 10). The Land List of 1730 shows that the Company's desire to parcel out land from its plantation to its own servants bore results.

Thus, it appears that while the Company had a settlement policy that favored people with capital, Danes, families, Lutherans, whites and Company employees, these preferences only partially influenced the actual composition of the St. John population.

### **The First Planters**

The sources shed little light on the first planters on St. John. Bredal wrote in July 1718 that three planters had gone to St. John, and ten others had registered claims to plantations (11). A month later he reported that "nearly 30 men" had claimed plantations on St. John (12). However, according to the Land List of 1729 only 10 plantations were taken up in 1718, although there is evidence that this figure may be low. In 1722 Bredal prepared a list showing 39 plantation owners on St. John (13), a figure which corresponds closely with information in the Land Lists.

While we have some idea of the number of plantations occupied in 1718, the sources are rather silent with respect to the owners. Pieter Duurloo was said to be the first planter on St. John (14). In 1719, Jens Hansen Grundt, a Sergeant, was granted a plantation in accordance with the Company's preference for Danes and Company employees (15). It is known that Jacob von Stell began harvesting cotton in 1721 (16) and that Cornelius Delicat had erected a sugar work by 1722 (17), so it is likely that they were among the first settlers. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that Johan Heinrich Sieben, supposedly one of the prime movers of the colonization initiative, is not shown by Bredal as a plantation owner in 1722, although he did acquire one later (18).

### **The Planters' Nationality**

As mention above, Danish citizens of the West Indies consisted of Danes and foreign nationals who had sworn an oath of allegiance to the Danish King. The first planters came from St. Thomas, but what was their national composition? And how large was the Danish contingent?

Two sources can be used to help answer these questions: Bredal's 1722 list of planters and the Land Lists of 1728 and 1733. There are also some desultory remarks about some planters' nationality in the Governors' correspondence. Table 9 presents the findings.

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 TABLE 9: NATIONALITY OF THE PLANTERS ON ST. JOHN
 

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Year	Dutch	Danes	French	Britons	Unknown	Total
1722	23 (39%)	8 (20%)	7 (18%)	0 (00%)	1 (03%)	39
1728	49 (56%)	23 (26%)	5 (06%)	2 (02%)	9 (10%)	88
1733	53 (62%)	21 (25%)	4 (05%)	3 (04%)	4 (05%)	85

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SOURCES: RA, V-g-K, No. 95: "Character pa indvanerne pa Eylandet St. Jan", enclosed in Bredal to the Company 7-15-1722; St. John Land Lists 1728, 1733.

Except for those planters whose nationality is known from other sources, the above classification is based on name. Persons whose names are difficult to classify have been shown as "unknown". Some Germans may have been classified as Dutch, because it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the two nationalities by name. Widows have been classified according to the surname of their husbands.

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It can be seen from Table 9 that the Dutch predominated, as they constituted more than half of the plantation owners. Danes comprised only 20 to 25 percent. The French were relatively numerous initially, but their representation declined during the period. The British were hardly present.

The picture is almost similar to that of St. Thomas, where the Dutch also predominated, but where more nationalities were present (19). It is clear that despite Danish sovereignty, foreign nationalities comprised the great majority of the population and dominated the agricultural economy. Nevertheless, the Danish representation was twice as high as on St. Thomas, where in 1716 Danish planters were estimated at between 10 and 12 percent of the population (20).

It appears that in accordance with Company policy all of the early planters came from St. Thomas. Large numbers of Dutchmen, most of them from other West Indian islands, had migrated to St. Thomas from the outset of the Danish occupation (21). Bredal mentions that several Dutch colonists on St. John were second generation citizens (22). The French were mainly Huguenots who had fled the French islands because of religious persecution (23).

TABLE 10: THE WHITE POPULATION OF ST. JOHN 1728 AND 1733

	MEN			WOMEN		CHILDREN	SUM
	Planters	Other men	Overseers	Planters	Other women		
Caneel Bay Q.	3	1	6	3	3	5 <sup>+</sup>	21
Duurloo Bay Q.	2	0	5	0	2	2	11
Cruz Bay Q.	7	1	10	4	6	16	44
Reef Bay Q.	4	0	6	0	1	0	11
Lamesure Q.	1	0	3	1	0	1	6
Coral Bay Q.	0	12	5	0	0	0	17
French Q.	3	1	0	0	4	6	14
Maho Bay Q.	3	1	2	1	4	4	15
Current sum	23	16 <sup>++</sup>	37	9	20		
SUM		76			29	34	139
Westergaard <sup>+++</sup>		76			6	41	123

Caneel Bay Q.	0	2	6	2	0	0	10
Duurloo Bay Q.	1	0	3	0	2	9	15
Cruz Bay Q.	7	6	6	3	6	21	49
Reef Bay Q.	4	1	3	0	6	10	24
Lamesure Q.	3	0	4	1	3	2	13
Coral Bay Q.	2	1	2	1	1	5	12
French Q.	7	2	1	0	6	3	19
Maho Bay Q.	2	3	2	0	5	3	15
Current sum	26	15	27	7	29		
SUM		68			36	53	157
Westergaard <sup>+++</sup>		97			53	58	208

SOURCE: RA, V-g-K, St. John Land Lists of 1728 and 1733

More is known about the Danish colonists on St. John, as most were attached to the Company. Table 11 classifies the Danish planters by occupational background:

TABLE 11: OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUND OF THE DANISH PLANTERS ON ST. JOHN, 1722, 1728, 1733

	1722	1728	1733
Administrators	5	12	11
Soldiers	2	4	5
Planters	1	7	5
Total	8	23	21

SOURCES: RA, V-g-K, No. 95: "Character pa indvanerne pa Eylandet St. Jan", enclosed in Bredal to the Company, 7-15-1722; St. John Land Lists 1728, 1733; Gageboger for St. Thomas og St. John 1718-1733.

The 1728 "administrator" category includes the Lutheran priest, Phillip Adam Dietrich. The category "planters" refers to Danes with no apparent attachment to the Company.

It can be seen that only a few Danes other than Company employees felt tempted to take up a plantation on St. John. Comparison of the names in the Land Lists with those in the Gageboger indicates that several soldiers sent over to the West Indies became administrators. Poul Hansen Stage, the Cashier, is one example. Another is Johan Reimert Soedtmann, who was a soldier before the Company recruited him and made him the Town Bailiff of St. John because of his "cleverness and capabilities" (24). Moreover, there are several examples of soldiers who became overseers, for example the Company overseer Svend Borgesen (25).

#### Planter Capital

The sources provide little information about where the capital for the colonization came from. There are three possibilities: 1) it came from the planters; 2) it came from the Company; 3) it came from external sources. It can be ascertained that both the planters and the Company invested in St. John, while nothing definitive can be said respecting the third possibility.

Bredal reported from St. Thomas in 1721 that "those who have had fully grown children in this island have sent them there [St. John]. Now the parents here can guarantee the credit which they have with the Company, and as they have more funds than a newly arrived

colonist they can continue the cultivation with greater energy" (26). In the same letter he noted that agricultural progress on the plantations of Jacob van Stell and Pieter Duurloo "could never have happened in such a short time if they had not had resources from here".

Elsewhere, Bredal mentioned that planter Johannes Charles "has previously been a citizen of St. Thomas, but as his plantation on this island has been taken from him by the Company because of debt, they have found it necessary to help him and his wife in their poverty with a lot on St. John" (27).

The above quotations show that capital came directly from the planters and as credit from the Company. The last quotation, however, is somewhat problematic as it is not clear if the "they" refers to the Company, or to other planters or merchants. Besides helping planters with land grants and credit, the Company also invested directly in a plantation on St. John.

It is possible that some capital came from external sources. In 1719 Bredal mentioned that in 1716 the planters of St. Thomas owed Dutch merchants in Amsterdam more than 40,000 rigsdalers, which equaled the Company's own claims against the planters (28). In 1721 Bredal learned that several planters were indebted to the Dutch firm of Jeremias van der Meer & Zoonen (29). But, it is not possible from available sources to establish any direct connection between external capital and the colonization of St. John.

#### Planter Residency

Information respecting the place of residence of the St. John planters is presented in Tables 12 and 13, which show that less than half the plantation owners lived on the island. It can be seen from Table 12 that less than half of the St. John plantation owners lived on the island. Between 1728 and 1733, however, the percentage of planters living on St. John rose slightly, while the percentage living on St. Thomas declined.

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TABLE 12: RESIDENCY OF ST. JOHN PLANTATION OWNERS 1728 AND 1733

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	St. John	St. Thomas	Absentee	Unknown
1728	36%	50%	1%	13%
1733	41%	42%	5%	12%

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SOURCE: RA, V-g-K, St. John Land Lists 1728 and 1733

The "absentee" category refers to plantation owners known to live outside the Danish islands.

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TABLE 13: RESIDENCY OF ST. JOHN PLANTERS BY QUARTER IN 1728 AND 1733

	On the plantation	St. Thomas	Absent	Unknown	SUM
Caneel Bay Q.	6	4	0	2	12
Duurloo Bay Q.	2	4	0	0	6
Cruz Bay Q.	11	3	1	1	16
Reef Bay Q.	4	10	0	3	17
Lamesure Q.	2	7	0	2	11
Coral Bay Q.	0	7	1 <sup>+</sup>	1	9
French Q.	3	5	0	2	10
Maho Bay Q.	4	3	0	0	7
SUM	32	43	2	11	88 <sup>++</sup>
Westergaard <sup>+++</sup>	28	36	1	-	65

1728

Caneel Bay Q.	3 <sup>++++</sup>	5	1	2	11
Duurloo Bay Q.	1	5	0	0	6
Cruz Bay Q.	11	4	1	1	17
Reef Bay Q.	4	3	0	0	7
Lamesure Q.	4	6	0	1	11
Coral Bay Q.	3	5	1 <sup>+</sup>	3	12
French Q.	7	4	0	2	13
Maho Bay Q.	2	4	0	2	8
SUM	35	36	3	11	85 <sup>++++</sup>
Westergaard <sup>+++</sup>	67	4	1	-	72

1733

SOURCE: RA, V-g-K, St. John Land Lists of 1728 and 1733

+ The Company, which is difficult to place, is included here.

++ The figures presented in this Table differ somewhat from those in tables showing the number of plantations. This is because some planters owned more than one plantation, while others were joint owners. Thus, 78 planters owned own plantation each, 4 owned two, 1 owned 2½ and 5 owned half a plantation each, with the result that 88 planters owned 91 plantations.

+++ Westergaard (1917), Appendix I, 319.

++++ Owned by the minor heirs of Cornelius Delicat's widow, who lived with their guardian Jacob Delicat in Reef Bay. Here it is decisive that they are on St. John. Generally, minors are included in their guardian's residence, as it is most likely that they lived there.

+++++ Here 70 own a single plantation, 8 own two, 1 owns 2½, 2 own three, 1 owns four and 3 own half a plantation each, which results in 85 planters owning 100 plantations.

Several reasons help explain why most St. John plantation owners lived on St. Thomas. First, nearly all the original plantation owners came from St. Thomas, and many felt comfortable there. Secondly, many already had plantations on St. Thomas, which they kept as their "manor house". Thirdly, some may have preferred to live in the seaport of Charlotte Amalie for social and/or economic reasons (30). Fourth, some planters undoubtedly feared an English attack against St. John during the early years of the colonization. Finally, fear of the slaves was undoubtedly a deterrent, particularly since many of the plantations on St. John were isolated from one another by wood and mountain, and there were few places of security. During the period under study most St. Thomas residents must have considered St. John as a godforsaken wilderness beyond civilization.

## CHAPTER 6: THE ADMINISTRATION OF ST. JOHN

### The Early Administration

No civil authority seems to have existed on St. John during the first years of colonization. Rather it appears that the island was under army rule, since one of the Company demands was that the planters obey orders from the commandant concerning everything relating to the defense of the island (1). It would not be unusual if no civil authority existed, for in an early phase of development, coupled with the threat of foreign attack, the military must have a dominant position. Moreover, from the Company's point of view there was a limited need for a separate civil authority during this early period, as the soil was not yet fully cultivated, the number of inhabitants was small, taxes could not be expected before 1725 because of the tax exemption period, and, finally, a civil official would be an additional burden on the Company's limited capital resources.

A start was made toward the establishment of a civil authority on November 21, 1724 when Phillip Gardelin was commissioned "vice supreme head" of St. John (2). But Gardelin did not arrive in the West Indies until late June of the following year (3). And, as he was also commissioned Head BookKeeper for the Company, which was his primary function, his presence on St. John was probably cursory.

As soon as Gardelin reached St. Thomas he began putting in order the Company accounts back to 1714 (4). The accounts were in such confusion that Governor Thambsen would have nothing to do with them (5). This time consuming job probably kept Gardelin on St. Thomas for much of the time, a supposition supported by his letters home from St. Thomas. Nevertheless, despite Gardelin's limited presence, a start was made in the civil administration of St. John during this period.

### The Town Bailiff on St. John 1727-1733

A civil authority of a more meaningful nature became a reality on May 20, 1727, when Johan Reimart Soedtmann, a Company clerk, was appointed temporary Town Bailiff (6). This appointment can be considered as more meaningful than Gardelin's because Soedtmann settled on his sugar plantation in Maho Bay and, consequently resided permanently in his jurisdiction (7).

It must be noted that secondary studies and archival shelflists use the term "Landfoged" when speaking of this official, but he is called "Byfoged" or Town Bailiff in the documentary sources. This title suggests that the Town Bailiff was to be head authority in a town on St. John. It has already been noted that the Company harbored ideas of establishing a town below the fort at Coral Bay.

The office of Town Bailiff was established because there was no firm administrative grip on St. John. Conditions were such that "no registration and law enforcement has happened", so Soedtmann was ordered to "go there to undertake legal matters" (8). Among other things, the Company Directors were thinking of the confusing condition of the land certificates. But their primary concern was the growing need to make a Land List, as the tax exemption period had expired for many plantations by 1727 (9).

The citizen's captain, the militia chief and the commandant of the fort were to assist the Town Bailiff in certain of his tasks (10). In 1733 Soedtmann also had a couple of officials, Peder Kroyer and Peder Sorensen, under his direction to assist with probate matters (11).

The Town Bailiff's responsibilities included probate matters, the collection of debts and fines owed to the Company, and he was to take care that "no foreign ships either unload or load there by which the reputation of the Company could be damaged". Apart from his standing instructions the Town Bailiff occasionally received orders to undertake special assignments, such as inventorying and supervising the Company's plantation, or receiving statements for the Land List (12).

His instructions restricted the authority and personal initiative of the Town Bailiff. With respect to probate matters, the Town Bailiff could only interfere if the deceased had property on St. John exclusively. If the deceased also had property on St. Thomas, the administration/distribution of the estate had to take place there. In the case of fines the Town Bailiff was not allowed to proceed without orders from the Governor, and he must have nothing to do with payments. The Town Bailiff could neither take action on behalf of the Company, or start property executions without written permission from the Governor.

The limitations imposed on the Town Bailiff's freedom of action show that in administrative matters St. John did not have independent status, but was essentially subordinate to St. Thomas. The fact that his authority lay primarily within the financial sphere indicates that the Company's interest in St. John was largely economic.

### **The Qualifications of the Administrators**

Generally speaking the men who governed St. Thomas - St. John during our period seem to have been rather competent. At least the Company Directors were satisfied with the performance of most of them.

Certainly the Directors were pleased with Erik Bredal, who did much to improve the administrative chaos that he inherited from his predecessor, Mikkel Crone. Bredal tried to resign as Governor on several occasions from 1720 onward, but not until 1724 did the Company reluctantly accept his resignation (13). A few years later the Company offered him a position as supervisor of all its property on the islands, which he rejected (14). When the accounts from the period of his governorship were being settled, it appeared that he owed some "table money". Governor Suhm, however, asked the Company to release Bredal from this debt as a means of encouraging him to return to its service (15). When St. Croix was colonized the Directors wanted Bredal to take charge, but "he was absent at that

time" (16). From the Company's point of view, therefore, Bredal can be considered a valued Governor.

Otto Jacob Thambesen succeeded Bredal, but he died after only six months in office, which means that he had little opportunity to accomplish much. The Council of Secretaries appointed Frederik Moth as his temporary replacement.

Moth had worked his way up in the Company from ship's captain, to steward of the warehouse, to Chief Merchant before being named temporary Governor. It is likely that Moth was an able administrator, even though the Company did not make his appointment permanent. The Directors thought that he lacked loyalty and zeal (17), charges which Moth vigorously refuted (18). Nonetheless, the Directors believed that he had been a good man, a view which Suhm confirmed (19). Moth regained respectability when he was appointed the first Governor of St. Croix in 1734 (20).

Henrik Suhm, Moth's successor, served as Governor for six years (1727-1733). Prior to his appointment he had served as Governor of the Gold Coast. Although the sources provide no information about the Directors' opinion of him, it can be assumed from his long appointment that they were satisfied. On the other hand, both Johan Horn, the Company Bookkeeper, and Gardelin, complained that Suhm was obstinate (21), which, of course, does not mean that he was a bad Governor. At most it implies that he had difficulties working with some of his subordinates.

Phillip Gardelin relieved Suhm in 1733. It is outside the scope of this paper to evaluate his Governorship. But his performance as Head Bookkeeper can be discussed. It is certain that before Gardelin became Governor the Directors were more than pleased with having him in its service. The Company, through Bredal, tried unsuccessfully to dissuade him from resigning his position in St. Thomas in 1717 (22). When he re-entered the Company's service in 1725, his abilities as an accountant became evident when he found "some hundreds of thousands of rigsdalers" in outstanding debts (23). The Directors were so pleased that they appointed him Vice Commandant of St. John, with a substantial increase in salary (24). Suhm also praised Gardelin as "a most industrious and careful man" and recommended that the Company give him a plantation in St. John to keep him in its service (25).

The last of the leading civil servants requiring attention is Johan Reimert Soedtmann, whose office was directly connected to St. John. Like Moth, Soedtmann had worked his way up within the Company, so he cannot have been without abilities. He entered the Company's service as a soldier in 1721. A year later he was promoted to sub-assistant "due to his capacity and cleverness". In 1724 he is mentioned as an assistant. Finally he became Town Bailiff of St. John upon recommendation of his father-in-law, Phillip Gardelin (26).

While the Company seems to have been taken care in selecting well qualified Governors and high ranking officials to administer its West Indian colonies, it was not so scrupulous when it came to the lesser civil servants. It has been mentioned that Edward Poulsen and Harboe were sent to St. John because of heavy drinking and incapacity respectively. Unfortunately, they were not isolated examples.

In the spring of 1720 two apprentices arrived in the West Indies, but both were such drunkards that one had to be made a soldier (27). In 1721 Andreas Hissing, the Bookkeeper died, but Governor Bredal refused to replace him with someone local because "none of the assistants here can post anything properly", thereby permitting the accounts to suffer (28).

Nor was Hissing free of faults, for after he married "he was more careful about his own business than that of the Honorable Company, and the rest of the time he spent at inns" (29). The same letter reported that two assistants, Friis and Harbek, had been jailed in Christianfort as an example, because they had neglected Company interests. The newly appointed Head Bookkeeper, Johan Horn, complained of the quality of the lesser officials (30), as did Governor Thambesen, who, also accused Horn of neglect (31). When the Cashier, Poul Hansen Stage, wanted to resign in 1724, Thambesen wrote that none of his assistants could be trusted with the money (32).

Court officials were also lackluster. In his first letter to the Directors Thambesen wrote that Sandberg "who presides over the Court of the Ordinary Council...is totally useless, as he is incapable of grasping even the smallest amount of information unless someone copies it down for him" (33). Bredal complained that there were too few judges, some of whom were "ignorant of the law" (34). Suhm reported that Andreas Hammer, the former Town Bailiff of St. Thomas, "is so addicted to lechery that due to his many excesses, and complaints from the citizenry that no one could walk in the streets because of his attacks or feel their lives secure, he has been placed in jail where to this day no improvement can be expected; consequently we are so embarrassed with him that we most humbly ask what we are to do with this desperate person" (35). Some stories the sources tell!

The examples of official incapacity are numerous. It could be suspected that the letter writers made the lesser officials much worse than they actually were in order to cover their own faults, or to press the Company into sending more people, since most of the letters contained requests for new assistants. But, because the examples are so numerous, diverse and sent by different people - for example, all Governors but Moth - the picture presented cannot be too distorted.

As the nature of the sources is to report the unusual it is difficult to say whether all lower officials were poorly qualified and undisciplined. But the number of examples certainly indicates that this kind of Company servant was rather common. Since most Danes felt that service in the West Indies spelt certain death (36), it can be assumed that the best qualified office clerks stayed home, while most people who went to the islands did so because they could not hold a job in the Mother Country.

The poor conditions of administration in the Danish West Indies were not caused only by an unqualified, undisciplined civil service, but also by the stingy policy of the Company. The Company paid extremely low wages, which, coupled with the high cost of living in the islands, resulted in incessant demands for pay increases (37). Thambesen gave a good illustration of the gravity of the situation when he suggested that the Company raise a sub-assistant's wage from seven to ten rigsdalers a month "because he cannot get food, much less clothes." "The poor assistants", Thambesen continued (38):

have to add to their subsistence by scribing for some of the planters on this island, and he who is incapable of the Dutch language must soon die, which means that the Company's service is extremely neglected, and we can assure the Honorable Gentlemen that the worse of the assistants have very little or no desire to remain in the Company's service.

Given this situation it is no wonder that some of the lower officials became negligent and drunk. Matters were further complicated by frequent illness and deaths, resulting in more

work (at least in theory), for those who were still able, especially as the Company was reluctant to send out new people (39).

### The Nature of Colonial Administration

As a consequence of the poor quality and uneven performance of Company officialdom, the colonial administration was chaotic and inefficient. The state of the accounts provides the best example of this administrative sloppiness.

In the Summer of 1718 it was reported that the account books for 1715-1716 were almost finished (40). The accounts, then, were already a couple of years behind. Moreover, the work which had been done does not seem to have been satisfactory, for when Gardelin began a thorough revision of the accounts in 1725 he had to start as far back as 1714. In the books for 1715-1716 he found "some faults and mis-entries", which resulted in a demand for an assistant to help set the record straight (41). The mess in the accounts continued throughout Bredal's period. By 1724 it had become so bad that Thambsen disclaimed any responsibility (42).

There are other examples of maladministration. Probate matters were neglected, as was the registration of plantations on St. John. In 1733 Governor Gardelin warned the Town Bailiff in Charlotte Amalie that he should do something about the twenty-three probate cases that had not been tended to for several years, causing "muttering" among the citizenry (43). In 1727 Horn found that there were still twenty-four plantations on St. John that had not been measured, which meant that "the Company loses its right to land tax" (44). The Company had demanded in 1719 and again in 1722 that a Land List be prepared for St. John (45). Nevertheless, the first Land List was not made until 1728, three years after the first tax exemptions began to expire. As there had been many disputes and cases about plantation boundaries, and a few demands for new measurements, the planters were ordered to appear before Secretary Schionemann to show proper land certificates and certificates of area measurement (46). There had been many similiar boundary disputes on St. Thomas (47).

The incompetency of the administration resulted in lack of respect from the planters, which can be seen by the fact that the administrators had great difficulty in realizing their demands. For instance, it was announced twice in 1724 that everyone should report with their weigh slips to the Head BookKeeper's office in Christianfort; but this never happened, and therefore a third request had to be made (48). Before Suhm's arrival in 1727 orders had been given that everyone should pay head and land taxes for two years, but, according to Suhm, this never occurred (49).

It is in the light of these conditions that the faulty Land Lists for St. John must be understood. It is obvious that there was great trouble in having the planters deliver their reports for the Lists. Jacob Schionemann, who signed the Land List for 1728, complained in a postscript that despite many warnings planters did not present their reports. He thought it would be better if colonial officials went out to the individual plantations and made a register of the objects for taxation.

In 1730 Gardelin reported that "many of the inhabitants do not report to the office either when a slave dies or is sold, consequently no small argument is caused every year in their bills and a continuous writing off on the books. It seems absolutely best to me that the inhabitants of St. John, as well as here [St. Thomas], should be entered according to their own reports of head and land tax" (50). Three months later Suhm also recommended that the planters be required to hand in reports for the Land List (51). The Company approved

of this procedure, with the proviso that the planters' figures must be found reasonable (52).

Comparison of the 1733 Land List with that of 1728 shows that the problem of poor reporting was increasing. It seems that the situation had gotten totally beyond the control of the administration. Lack of administrative personnel seems to have been one reason (53). If there had been sufficient qualified office clerks it would not have been difficult to visit each plantation to estimate its tax. And, if the Company had had competent officials, there would have been greater respect from the planters for its directives. But, as noted, the Directors were very reluctant to send out new people, a policy which benefited the planters. To collect all debts, taxes and money owed it the Company had to employ more and better manpower. But the associated expenses might well exceed the losses of poor administration. Thus the dilemma: could the Company afford to lose the revenue, or would it be more economical to employ more servants?

### CONCLUSION

The colonization of St. John became a reality because in the West Indies and Denmark there were people economically interested in spreading plantation agriculture to new territory. The St. Thomas planters were interested because of emerging problems with operating their own plantations profitably, while the Company in Copenhagen saw a possibility to expand its colonial income.

The initiative came from the St. Thomas planters in the form of two addresses in 1715. At first the Company did not respond. But seeing the English interest in St. John, it took the opportunity of a new address in 1716 to direct that the colonization should proceed as soon as possible. By 1717, however, the planters and the Governor had become reluctant due to fear of an English attack. The Company, unwilling to accept this negative attitude, ordered the Governor to get the project underway before the English took possession of the island. While the Governor worried about the vulnerability of the colony on St. Thomas to foreign reprisal, he nevertheless obeyed his instructions, and St. John was occupied in March 1718.

The Danish occupation of St. John sparked protests from both the Spanish and British. That the colonization succeeded despite this opposition must be attributed to disputes between the home governments and local authorities as to the nature of action to be taken. Local authorities in the English Leeward Islands several times asked for permission to forcibly expel the Danes, but the British Government would not authorize such action. Conversely, colonial officials in the Spanish islands twice disregarded orders from the Spanish King to drive out the Danes. If either of these European powers had attacked, the Danes would have been extremely hard pressed to maintain a presence on St. John.

The Company claimed both St. John and Crab Island. While the latter was better suited to plantation agriculture, St. John was preferred because of its proximity to St. Thomas and because it was hoped that its occupation would be of only marginal interest to the Spanish.

Colonization commenced despite uncertainties about the reaction of neighboring foreign powers. Plantations were quickly established in accordance with the following pattern: The north coast of St. John was taken up during the first few years, then the southern and west regions, while the eastern section of the island around Coral Bay was taken up last.

By 1729 the whole of the island had been parcelled out. Despite the external threat, the first plantations were not established under the protection of Fort Frederiksvaern, but where soil and terrain best suited sugar cane cultivation.

Plantation establishment occurred in three main waves, of which the last two were connected with periods of drought that had exacerbated the problem of soil exhaustion on St. Thomas. The first economic results of the colonization could be seen in 1721, when crops of sugar cane and cotton are reported. In 1722 there were only two sugar works on St. John, but within a few years many others had been constructed. Although the sources contain little information about the development of economic activity on individual plantations, there are strong indications that the plantation economy was still relatively underdeveloped at the outbreak of the slave rebellion in 1733.

Although the plantation system on St. John conformed in some ways with the general West Indian pattern described by Pares and Sheridan, there were several notable differences. Not all the coastal areas were taken up first, and coastal plantations did not always have their narrow sides fronting the sea. The plantations, while generally larger than those on St. Thomas, were somewhat smaller than elsewhere in the Caribbean. Their size seems to have been determined primarily by the capacity of their sugar works. Three plantation sizes predominated: 146 acres; 109.5 acres and 73 acres. Plantation shapes seem to have been rather diverse, although the sources do not permit a clear picture to emerge. Sugar was the primary crop during the 1720's, but it was superseded by cotton during the 1730's.

It has been ascertained that the Company tried to follow a population policy that preferred Danes, people with capital, families, Lutherans and Company servants. Danes, however, constituted no more than 25% of the colonists, while the Dutch predominated, as on St. Thomas. Past and present Company officials comprised most of the Danish plantation owners on St. John. Only about half of all plantation owners lived on St. John in 1733.

Very little can be said with certainty about the capital behind the colonization. It can be determined, however, that it came partly from the planters, and partly from the Company. The Company's contribution came primarily in the form of credit, but it also invested directly in a large sugar plantation at Coral Bay.

There does not appear to have been any civil authority on St. John before 1727, when the office of Town Bailiff was created to meet the demand for a registration and sealing of law and the preparation of the first Land List. By 1733, if not earlier, the Town Bailiff had two assistants to help him with probate cases.

Some factors can be identified as having a forwarding effect on the colonization. First, soil exhaustion began to have some effect on harvests in St. Thomas, particularly during periods of drought, while St. John offered a virgin area. Secondly, available capital could find new fields of activity on St. John. Thirdly, there were minimal logistical and transportation problems due to the close proximity of St. John to St. Thomas. Finally, the seven years of tax exemption certainly encouraged people to invest in plantations.

There were also some factors that retarded the colonization. First, there was fear of an English attack, which discouraged plantation development during the early years. Secondly, throughout the 1720's there was a shortage of slaves, one of the most essential factors of production. Thus, forest clearance, planting and harvesting proceeded slowly. Thirdly, periods of drought and hurricanes put the planters in considerable debt to the Company, which, in turn, made it difficult for them to increase their investments in manpower and capital improvements, since the Company was unwilling to extend the

necessary credit. Needless to say, however, the forwarding factors predominated, as the island was completely taken up, and relatively well developed within eleven years.

From a broader perspective it can be seen that the settlement of St. John resembled more closely the colonization of St. Thomas than that of St. Croix. In the first place, the planters did not pay for their land on St. Thomas and St. John, while the Company sold plantation lots on St. Croix. Secondly, there was no clear plan followed in parcelling out plantation grounds on St. John and St. Thomas, while the Company followed a well developed land distribution policy on St. Croix. This can be seen by the fact that on St. John the plantations were not measured in advance, which resulted in irregular plantation boundaries. On St. Croix plantation lots were not sold until the entire island had been measured and divided into quarters with a strictly regular division of plantations, whose narrow sides fronted on the sea.

On a third point, however, St. John represented a transitional phase between the other two islands. On St. Thomas the plantations were generally small, while on St. John the most common plantation size became that of the capacity of a sugar work. This size became totally dominant on St. Croix.

This paper has demonstrated that economic motives were behind both the Danish presence in the West Indies and the colonization of St. John. The Company Charter of 1671 explicitly stated that its motives were economic. Governor Crone foresaw large profits from the colonization of St. John. The Company aimed at a quick cultivation by granting freedom from taxation for seven years, and it sought the most profitable type of cultivation by demanding that sugar works be built within a certain time period. The Company also sought rich planters for the colonization. Finally, the Town Bailiff's instructions show that he was primarily to look after the Company's economic interests.

St. John never became the sugar adventure that was dream of, in part because land suitable for profitable sugar cultivation proved to be limited. Seen from the point of view of production and economic returns, it might be argued that the colonization of this island had been a mistake. But there were no other realistic options in 1718. Before the island had time to completely develop its agricultural potential, and before the contemplated foundation of a seaport at Coral Bay could become a reality, Denmark purchased the larger and more fertile island of St. Croix from France. After 1733 investment capital, planter expertise, slave labor and Company interest was directed toward developing the plantation economy of St. Croix. Thus, it was not the slave rebellion that put St. John into a secondary position, but rather competition from the rich sugar plain of St. Croix.

## APPENDIX: A NOTE ON SOURCES

My original intention was to write a paper based exclusively on primary source material. This was almost obligatory since so little historical literature on St. John exists. However, some secondary sources have been consulted for both specific and contextual background information.

Most primary source material predating 1755 lies in the archives of the West India-Guinean Company deposited at the Danish National Archives (Rigsarkivet) in Copenhagen (1). I have also used material from the collections of maps and private manuscripts at the Danish National Archives and the Royal Library.

The primary sources about St. John are not voluminous, and only a few of them deal with the island exclusively. Among these are the Land Lists and the expense accounts. Some information can be found in letters and related documentation sent from the Governor to the Company, but it is scanty and fragmentary compared to that for St. Thomas.

Several groups of sources, which have not been cited in the Bibliography, were unsuccessfully investigated. Among these were the Book of Instructions 1698-1717, the Management Ledger 1697-1734, and some reports and votes of 1708-1754. Furthermore, there are some gaps in the sources, the most important being the relevant papers in the West Indian Local Archives, which were inaccessible because of their poor condition.

Five important groups of sources require specific comment. The first is Peder Mariager's "Manuscript". Mariager was a longtime Company Bookkeeper in Copenhagen, who in 1753 wrote a history of Company operations in Africa and the West Indies. It is an invaluable source, which has been utilized by other scholars. However, I did not find it particularly germane to my paper, since I focus on conditions in the West Indies, while Mariager considers matters from the perspective of Company headquarters in Copenhagen. His information about conditions in the West Indies must necessarily have come from letters, documents and other records sent home. This means that in principle I had the possibility of knowing as much as he by examining the same records. Thus, his manuscript becomes a secondary source at many points. It is, however, a primary source whenever other sources are lacking or are silent, such as the Company's motives for colonizing St. John.

The next noteworthy source group is the American and African Copy Books, which contain the outgoing mail of the Company to the West Indies and Africa. This group includes orders and directions to the governors, numerous inquiries, and occasional complaints and reprimands. It is a useful source about the perceptions, evaluations, policies and viewpoint of the Company Directors.

A third invaluable source group consists of letters and documents sent home from the West Indies. Naturally, this correspondence reflects the viewpoint of the Governor and Council of Secretaries (Secretarradet). The Council of Secretaries, which consisted of the Governor, the Chief Merchant, the Cashier and the Bookkeeper, was the supreme authority of the islands. Its members signed all important letters to the Company, which meant in principle that their content was approved by all members. Thus, the Governor's personal viewpoint did not color their contents too greatly. But, the Governor also sent letters directly to the Company Directors without consulting the Council.

Obviously, neither the Governor nor the Council reported everything. Their own failings, for example, were seldom mentioned. On the other hand, one should not make too much out

of letters where the Governor underlines himself or his own efforts. These considerations raise the question about the reliability of this source group.

Let it be said at once that it was possible to verify only a little information due to the sparseness of alternative sources. Some of the information about foreign relations can be compared with documents in British archives printed in the Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies, 1699-1733. These generally agree with the letters of the Danish Governors, and sometimes even confirm conditions which are otherwise reported as rumors by the Danish Governors. It remains a fact, however, that it is impossible to confront most of the Governors' information with other sources. Therefore, we are in the sad, but usual, situation of possessing a central group of sources which cannot be controlled very carefully, but which nevertheless must be used in order to write history. Consequently, the material has been used with a critical eye in order to detect underlying motives.

The fourth group of sources is the Calendar of State Papers Colonial Series, America and the West Indies, a mammoth edition of English documents about the colonies. This published material contains letters that are crucial to an understanding of Anglo-Danish relations in the West Indies. The letters consist of both accounts and documents, often as extracts or enclosures. This source group is similar to the Danish Governors' letters and copybooks. Unfortunately, it too has deficiencies. Frequently it contains only summaries of the original documents, and sometimes the information is presented in an incomplete or somewhat distorted manner. Moreover, the perspective is generally from the British point of view. Thus, these sources have also been used cautiously.

The final noteworthy source group is the Land Lists or land tax records pertaining to St. John. This source group, covering the years 1728-1733, is extremely important as it contains considerable information about the plantations, their owners and their slave laborers. But, from a methodological point of view it is problematical as its purpose was taxation. Like any income tax return the Land Lists undoubtedly contain inaccuracies due to incorrect reporting.

Moreover, the Land Lists are incomplete. This is established by the fact that far from all planters bothered to send their tax returns to either the Bookkeeper on St. Thomas, or the Town Bailiff on St. John. I have ascertained that in 1728 some 24% of the planters did not hand in their returns. In 1733 this number had grown to 36%. One can see from comments on the Land Lists that those planters who had not handed in their returns were taxed on the basis of their returns the previous year. But, as it was frequently the same planters who sinned, many of these income tax returns were several years old and thus present an erroneous impression. For instance, one may find assessments in the Land List of 1733 based on data originally presented in 1730. Nearly 20% of the assessments in 1733 appear to have been copied from previous years.

Nevertheless, since the Land Lists are invaluable sources, it is important to establish which information can be regarded as sound and which is doubtful. The information that can be taken at face value includes plantation ownership, plantation cultivation, plantation location and the number of white persons on the plantations. There was no reason to alter this kind of data. On the other hand, there could be a reason to change the size of the plantations, as that figure provided the basis of the land tax. Such changes were unlikely, however, as the size was pretty constant and difficult to alter secretly from year to year. If necessary the Company Bookkeeper could summon the planters to present their certificates of land measurement, which would correctly determine the size.

This leaves the number of slaves, certain categories of which were also taxed, that must be used carefully, as this figure was susceptible to alteration. As noted above, in those years when a return was not obtained, information from the previous year was entered in the Land Lists. It is impossible to show direct copying of previous years for those plantations whose owners dutifully handed in assessments. For example, if one compares the number of slaves on each plantation listed in the first three Land Lists (1728-1730) one finds that most planters have a different number of slaves each year. Several plantations have identical numbers for two consecutive years, but not for the third. Some planters are shown as having the same number of slaves all three years, which is certainly suspicious, since it would be unusual if none died, or no new slaves were purchased during this period. A similar pattern occurs in the Land Lists of 1731-1733. Thus, it can be demonstrated that copying of previous returns occurred on some plantations, and one suspects that it occurred on many others.

As we are speaking about income tax returns, we also have to consider the possibility that they may have been "doctored" in various ways. In filling out his return the clever taxpayer may omit some pertinent data, which means that some slaves may have been "overlooked", or listed in a non-taxable category. Capable slaves, for instance, might have been listed as disabled, since these were tax free. It is equally easy to imagine that a capable slave did not have to be very ill before he was listed as disabled. It is also possible that taxable slaves may also have been placed into the group of "bosals" (new arrivals from Africa), who were tax free their first year.

Given these considerations, the number of slaves shown in the Land Lists must be considered a minimum. This is supported by the fact that the planters did not protest against tax assessments which in several cases were based on year old declarations. If the planters had paid more than they should have they would have undoubtedly protested in order to correct the figures. But this did not happen, an indication that the state of affairs cannot have been unfavorable to them. Therefore, it is likely that in many instances the actual number of slaves on a plantation was higher than shown in the Land Lists.

There is also some question whether the Land Lists always give the correct date when the plantation was claimed. For example, while all Land Lists show four plantations in Durlow Bay Quarter as being claimed in 1721, in a footnote to the first Land List, prepared in 1728, someone wrote that they "undoubtedly" had been taken up as early as 1718. The 1728 Land List contains several other similar notations. The explanation for such incorrect entries is probably that some planters capitalized on the sloppy administration by Company officials to insist that their plantations had not been claimed until 1721. Another example of this type of inaccuracy is when Company Bookkeeper Andreas Hissing obtained a land certificate for a plantation in 1721 that is not shown on the Land List, but which must be regarded as fact since the land certificate was entered in a separate register (2).

It must be concluded, therefore, that in addition to the number of slaves, the Land Lists cannot be fully relied on with respect to the total number of plantations, and the year when the plantation was claimed.

With respect to secondary sources, only the study by Hatch (1972) focuses specifically on the history of St. John. However, it relies almost exclusively on information taken from earlier historical studies, so it is derivative rather than original. As mentioned above, the early colonization of St. John is discussed briefly in several general histories of the Danish West Indies: Westergaard (1917), Larsen (1928), Bro-Jørgensen (1953), Thorild Hansen (1970), Dookhan (1974) and Palle Lauring (1978). Of these I have relied most

heavily on Bro-Jorgensen's account, which I found generally reliable. The studies by Larsen, Hansen and Lauring must be considered scientifically dubious because of insufficient documentation.

I have also been forced to discount much of the information in Westergaard's standard work because to my surprise I found much of it unreliable. Westergaard was the first to write a general history about the colonization of the Danish West Indies. However, my own research calls into question some of his statistical material relating to St. John. As his book has been of major importance to subsequent research, both in Denmark and the United States, and his statistics have been used uncritically by many scholars, it is necessary to discuss our differences.

My unease with the accuracy of Westergaard's statistics for St. John began when I noted that the total number of plantations he cited did not balance with mine. He states (3) that in 1728 and 1733 there were 87 plantations and 109 plantations respectively according to the Land Lists. By a thorough examination of those Land Lists I found that 91 plantations had been admitted by April 1728, and that in 1733 the number stood at just 103.

I cannot account for why Westergaard found fewer plantations than me in 1728; but I can offer an explanation for his figure of 109 for 1733. Although he never explains his methodology, he appears to have included as plantation owners those persons whose names were entered, but who were not assigned a plot number or a plot in the Land Lists. This method allowed him to reach a figure of 109 plantations. However, on several occasions it is explicitly mentioned in the Land Lists that the person in question lives on the plantation mentioned above, or that he/she owns it in partnership with the planter cited above. Clearly, in such cases we are not talking about two separate plantations. My figures have been adjusted to take these comments into account, whereas Westergaard seems to have ignored them.

Another point of disagreement is over the number of slaves (Table 3). Westergaard gives a figure of 677 slaves for 1728, whereas I found 806. He cites 1,087 slaves for 1733, while my figure is 1,255. These differences are so great that they cannot be attributed to miscount. I have checked my figures several times and am satisfied of their accuracy. So I can only conclude that Westergaard did not make such scrupulous use of the sources.

Westergaard and I also disagree on figures about planter residency (Table 13). He claims that 28 plantation owners lived on St. John, 36 resided on St. Thomas and 1 outside the Danish Islands in 1728. This gives him a total of 65. He does not explain the discrepancy between this figure and the 87 plantations he found. On the other hand, for 1728 I found 32 planters on St. John, 43 on St. Thomas, 2 outside the Danish islands and 11 with an undisclosed residency. Moreover, I have been able to fit the total of 88 planters with the actual number of plantations. A similar case obtains with respect to the figures for 1733. In that year Westergaard found only 4 St. John planters living on St. Thomas, while I located 36.

I cannot account for our great differences respecting residency. They cannot be attributed to some planters owning more than one plantation, as both of us took this into account in our calculations. My working method was to first examine the St. John Land Lists. If the owner's place of residence was not noted there, I then checked the St. Thomas Land Lists. In a few instances neither source gave place of residence, hence I made use of an "unknown" category in my tabulations.