

L'ÉCOSSE ET SES DOUBLES  
Ancien monde – nouveau monde

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*Old World – New World*  
*SCOTLAND AND ITS DOUBLES*

L'Harmattan

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ISBN : 978-2-296-13629-8  
EAN : 9782296136298

# DREAMS OF EMPIRE: SCOTLAND, CALEDONIA AND THE EMPORIUM OF THE INDIES

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In the late 1690s, the European commercial and political worlds were keenly interested in the news of the emergence of a Scottish empire at the heart of Spanish America. The Company of Scotland trading to Africa and the Indies, by planting a colony at Darien on the Isthmus of Panama, attempted to connect the great oceans of the Atlantic and Pacific and thereby situate Scotland at the heart of global trade. In the words of the scheme's chief promoter, William Paterson, the Company of Scotland seized the "key to the universe", and aimed at nothing less than enabling Scots "to give Laws to both Oceans and to become Arbitrators of the Commercial world".<sup>1</sup>

Despite this grand scheme for global domination, the Darien venture which created the colony of Caledonia is widely regarded as a catastrophic failure. Although some scholars have begun to reassess it, the "disaster" of Darien is still routinely described as ill-conceived, badly planned and executed with almost criminal incompetence, and it stands as surrogate for all that is bad about Scottish independent imperial activity.<sup>2</sup> While this essay does not seek to position the venture as

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<sup>1</sup> William Paterson, quoted in David Armitage, "The Scottish vision of empire: intellectual origins of the Darien venture", *A union for empire: political thought and the union of 1707*, Ed. J. Robertson, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Francis Russell Hart, *The Disaster of Darien*, Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin, 1929; George Pratt Insh, *The Company of Scotland trading to Africa and the Indies*, London and New York, Charles Scribners's Sons, 1932; John Prebble, *The Darien Disaster*, London, Pimlico, 2002 edition. For newer work, see David Armitage, "Scottish vision of empire"; C. Storrs, 'Disaster at Darien (1698-1700)? The persistence of Spanish imperial power on the eve of the demise of the Spanish Habsburgs', *European History Quarterly*, 29, 1 (1999), pp. 5-38; W. D. Jones, "The bold adventurers": a quantitative analysis of the Darien subscription list (1996)', *Scottish Economic and Social History*, 21, 1 (2001), pp. 22-42; Douglas Watt, *The price of Scotland: Darien, Union and the Wealth of Nations*, Edinburgh, Luath, 2007.

crowning glory in Scottish imperial history, it will suggest that it was a rational undertaking in the context of the mid-1690s. Although the settlement is well known to historians, the type of colony the Scots planned to settle has tended to be obscured by its failure. This paper aims to revisit the intentions of Scots in establishing a key territorial settlement at the heart of what appeared to be a grand commercial and particularly maritime empire.<sup>3</sup>

When the first fleet weighed anchor in Leith in July 1698, some 1200 people left with it. At the outset, its planned white population of 1200 in late 1698 can be compared to that of just over 7000 in Jamaica in 1700, an island which had been settled by England since 1655. This and other comparable colonies of settlement took time, even generations, to become established and secure. The first arrivals at Caledonia, for example, outnumbered the first settlement at Virginia in 1607 by some ten to one, which provides a useful indication of the seriousness with which the Scots took the creation of a colony.<sup>4</sup> For all the emphasis on the commercial aspects of the scheme, then, it is clear from the initial and proposed investment in human capital that this was a serious attempt to build a new society.<sup>5</sup> With those people went a series of ideas about how to run a colony and, in particular, how to structure and manage life in Caledonia. This essay explores the extent to which the Scots who went to Central America envisaged the creation of a new Scotland, of a 'double' that reflected much of what they had left behind. It suggests that as well as mirroring some elements of life in Scotland (or seeking to find improvements on a Scottish model) this venture ought to be viewed as more than simply a bilateral connection between Scotland and Caledonia. By positing a wider Atlantic context for the construction of Caledonia this essay argues that the new colony was informed by the flow and circulation of ideas, peoples and commodities across and around the Atlantic basin. It focuses, in particular, on four aspects of the planned

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<sup>3</sup> David Armitage, *The ideological origins of the British Empire*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 146.

<sup>4</sup> For Virginia, see Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: the settlement of North America to 1800*, London, Allen Lane, 2002, p. 130; for Jamaica, see Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and slaves: the rise of the planter class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713*, London and New York, W. W. Norton, 1973, p. 312.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Fry, "A commercial empire: Scotland and British expansion", Eds. T.M. Devine and J.R. Young, *Eighteenth-century Scotland: new perspectives*, East Linton, Tuckwell Press, 1999, pp. 53-69, makes the argument that Scotland adopted a commercial rather than colonial approach to empire.

colony — state building, naturalisation, religious toleration, relationships with the indigenous population, and slavery — to explore the influences on the settlers. Caledonia was not the first place that independent Scotland tried to establish an Atlantic empire, however, and to understand why this scheme emerged when and as it did in the 1690s, the essay begins with some of these earlier ventures.

## First forays

Scots had long recognised the value of empire, which they saw as operating alongside their long-standing European commercial connections. Attempts were made to found permanent settlements at Nova Scotia as early as the 1620s, and then, in 1634, Charles I granted a charter to a Scottish Guinea Company to exploit African trade.<sup>6</sup> This enterprise was wound up after five years, and it was not until the 1670s, after the restoration of the Stuart monarchy, that concerted Scottish imperial initiatives recommenced. By this time, a number of Scots were operating in the English and Dutch colonies in America and demand grew for Scotland to be given colonies of its own. In 1671, Charles I offered it the Caribbean island of Dominica, while proposals for the settlement of St Vincent in 1678 were still-born.<sup>7</sup> In North America, other colonies were established and while the Carolina settlement between 1684 and 1686 was short-lived, the East New Jersey settlement, founded in 1683, survived independently until swallowed up by the royal colony of New Jersey in 1702 and the community lasted there until well into the eighteenth century.<sup>8</sup> In addition to these schemes and to the thousands of Scots who inveigled themselves into foreign empires over the century, new opportunities opened up amidst the political tumult of the 1690s which kindled wider ambitions.

Under the reign of the Stuarts, English imperial expansion in the seventeenth century was often driven by a series of companies incorporated under a Royal charter. From Massachusetts Bay via the

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<sup>6</sup> N.E.S. Griffiths and J.G. Reid, "New evidence on New Scotland, 1629", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 49, 3 (1992), pp. 492-508; Robin Law, "The first Scottish Guinea Company, 1634-1639", *Scottish Historical Review*, 76, 2 (1997), pp. 185-202.

<sup>7</sup> Douglas Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic world, 1750-1820*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005, pp. 2-3.

<sup>8</sup> Ned C. Landsman, *Scotland and its first American colony, 1683-1765*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1985.

Levant Company to the East India Company, companies managed both commercial and territorial empires. Their power and status derived from their royal association but, with the overthrow of the Stuarts following the 'Glorious Revolution' in 1688, suddenly these enormous undertakings were left without political legitimacy. Some, like the Hudson's Bay Company were almost immediately successful in securing new parliamentary charters in the 1690s. Others, like the Royal African Company, founded in 1672, had always been especially close to the Restoration and were left particularly vulnerable to challenges from independent merchants and potential new rival companies.<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, French naval and privateering actions during the War of the League of Augsburg in the 1690s seriously hampered overseas trade and the companies plying it. In an attempt to secure their colonial and overseas revenues, European states became increasingly protectionist, which meant that Scotland was effectively further excluded from legitimate trade with English and Dutch colonies. There was a perceived and growing need for Scotland to find its own commercial outlets.

While these twin assaults of war and political upheaval weakened the English companies, it was also clear that great opportunities existed in the Atlantic in the 1690s. The sugar revolution had taken hold in the Caribbean and this highly labour-intensive crop spurred a rapidly-growing demand for enslaved Africans which meant that African trade was now potentially very lucrative despite wartime restrictions on English trade. Around 67,500 Africans were loaded on to English ships in the 1660s, but by the 1680s that number had risen to over 112,000. Despite the war, the growth continued (albeit more slowly) in the 1690s (to around 116,500) and thereafter the slave trade grew exponentially to the point where more than 250,000 people were exported in every decade from the 1750s until the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>10</sup> The Royal

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<sup>9</sup> K.G. Davies, *The Royal African Company*, London, Longman, Green & Co, 1957, pp. 11-12; Percival Griffiths, *A licence to trade: the history of the English chartered trading companies*, London and Tonbridge, Ernest Benn, 1974.

<sup>10</sup> Transatlantic slave trade database :

<http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/assessment/estimates.faces>, accessed 11.03.09; Eltis, *The rise of African slavery in the Americas*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp 152, 166; David Blackburn, *The making of new world slavery: from the baroque to the modern, 1492-1800*, London, Verso, 1997, part 1; Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and slaves: the rise of the planter class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713*, New York, Norton, 1973, pp. 224-262.

African Company held a nominal monopoly of English trade to and from the African coast, where it was in competition with French, Dutch and Portuguese companies. None of these companies was entirely secure – either in their support at home, or in their capacity to dictate terms to powerful rulers in Africa. As a result, the African coast was one region where smaller states, notably Denmark and Brandenburg, might carve out opportunities.<sup>11</sup>

## The Company of Scotland

In these circumstances, enthusiasm for empire grew in Scotland and in June 1693 an Act for Encouraging of Forraign Trade was passed. A group of 48 Edinburgh merchants actively promoted the idea of a Scottish Africa company, partly to provide an outlet for Scottish manufacturing but also as a joint stock vehicle to muscle in on the Royal African Company which was then under attack by a series of independent English merchants.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time, a group of London merchants wanted to break the monopoly of another great English concern, the East India Company. They saw an opportunity in using another company, established with the authority of the new British king, but based in Scotland rather than London, to break into the riches of Asian trade. This southern impulse also dovetailed with an existing Scottish eastern trade, which previously had been routed through other European countries, using naturalised Scots partners as a way into the Dutch Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC).<sup>13</sup> These twin, but not necessarily complementary, interests in different geographical locations, added to a long term desire by Scots for empire, resulted in the emergence of the Company of Scotland, trading to Africa and the Indies.

The Company was established by an Act of the Scottish Parliament in June 1695. It offered the prospect not only of trade and settlement in Africa or India, but America too, though at this point no mention was made of a settlement in Panama. Indeed, it is important to note that although the Company has become synonymous with Darien,

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<sup>11</sup> Davies, *Royal African Company*, p. 12; for Danish slave trade estimates see <http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/assessment/estimates.faces>, accessed 11.03.09.

<sup>12</sup> Insh, *Company of Scotland*, pp. 26-35.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Mackillop, "Accessing empire: Scotland, Europe, Britain and the Asia trade, 1695 - c. 1750", *Itinerario*, 29, 3 (2005), p. 9.

that settlement was not part of its early plan. The Company was to be capitalised with £600,000 raised by subscription: half in Scotland and half in London. Much of the early emphasis was on London, which was home a large number of Scots and where governors of the Royal Scottish Corporation backed the Company.<sup>14</sup> It was also the residence of one of the prime movers behind the Company, William Paterson. Almost immediately the London merchants began to raise their share; at the same time, slightly implausibly, they hoped to keep news of their endeavours from the English parliament because, as Paterson put it, it “might be of ill consequence, and especially since a great many considerable persons are already allarm’d at it”.<sup>15</sup> Within two weeks of the subscription books opening in November 1695, the full amount was raised among enthusiastic supporters (both Scots and English) in London. But, as Paterson feared, the venture had powerful opponents – in England and America – who moved to stifle the Company. Opening the Company’s subscription books had caused a fall in the value of East India Company stock and the House of Lords was moved to propose a ban on English investment in the Scottish company, and on the company acquiring ships and recruiting seamen in England. Such was their influence that the King himself was turned against the plan, and in January 1696, the London books were abandoned.<sup>16</sup> This huge loss of capital was a crushing blow; but perhaps worse was a perception among Scots of their betrayal by their King. It sparked defiance in Scotland, and a recalibrated subscription of £400,000 was taken up by a huge range of Scots, both private individuals and institutions.<sup>17</sup> From a joint stock company aiming to enter international trade, the Company had become a national endeavour.

Yet even at this stage, few thoughts were of Panama. It came late to the agenda, and did not emerge until July 1696; that is some 5 months *after* people began subscribing. What they subscribed to with such

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<sup>14</sup> Justine Taylor, *A cup of kindness: the history of the Royal Scottish Corporation, a London charity, 1603-2003*, East Linton, Tuckwell, 2003, p. 246; Watt, *Price of Scotland*, p. 31.

<sup>15</sup> William Paterson to Robert Chievely, 9 July 1695 in J. Hill Burton, *The Darien papers: being a selection of original letters and official documents relating to the establishment of a colony at Darien by the Company of Scotland...1695-1700*, Edinburgh, Bannatyne Club, 1869, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Insh, *Company of Scotland*, pp 57-60.

<sup>17</sup> For a detailed analysis of the subscription lists see: Jones, ‘The bold adventurers’.



enthusiasm was a great trading concern which was, as Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun later put it, "the only means to recover us from our miserable and despicable condition".<sup>18</sup> It offered a way out of the miseries imposed by the famines and war of the 1690s. It was, however, more than just a kind of investment mania. It looked like a rational plan in the context of the 1690s, not least because "[t]here are remarkable occurrences at this time, and many Disadvantages our Neighbours ly under...which seem...to portend glorious Success".<sup>19</sup> Certainly the opposition of the English and their American colonists (to say nothing of the later ire of the Spanish in relation to the formal settlement) lends credence to the notion that, in principle, the Company's admittedly ambitious aims of entering into the trades of both Africa and Asia made a certain amount of sense in the late seventeenth century.

Although the Company was established as a commercial organisation, it is clear that William Paterson at least harboured concerns about its mercantile competitors: "We ought not to think that we can ever bring an Indian business to bear from Scotland only by apeing the English and Dutch." He went on to highlight the travails of France, Denmark and Brandenburg in losing hundreds of thousands of pounds in their African ventures and noted that "we ought to expect no better success if our Designs be not well grounded and prudently managed."<sup>20</sup> In seeking an innovative solution to his concerns, Paterson proposed shifting the focus and purpose of the Company. It was he who advocated the creation of a great settlement at Darien in July 1696 which was accepted by the Company of Scotland.

Paterson, credited as one of the founders of the Bank of England, was one of the London-based merchants prominent in founding the company. In his early career, Paterson had been a merchant in the Bahamas and then in Europe and he claimed to have had the idea for a colony at Darien as early as the mid-1680s. He had tried in the past to persuade, firstly James II to invest, and then turned to financiers in the Netherlands and Brandenburg to support his plan "to erect a commonwealth and free port in the Emperor of Darien's country". By 1696, he saw an opportunity to resurrect this scheme and using his

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<sup>18</sup> Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, Two discourses concerning the affairs of Scotland, first discourse (1698) in Ed. David Daiches, *Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun: selected political writings and speeches*, Edinburgh, 1979, p. 31.

<sup>19</sup> William Paterson to Robert Chievely, 9 July 1695 in Burton, *Darien Papers*, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

growing influence in Edinburgh and "evidence" in the form of an account of Darien by Lionel Wafer, a buccaneer and ship's surgeon, based on his experiences there, Paterson convinced the Company of Scotland to settle on Darien.<sup>21</sup> It was meant to be secret, of course, but the authorities in London were already aware of it. The Council for Trade and Plantations argued in September "in case of any settlement by any nation on the Isthmus of Darien, a representation was ordered that a competent number of men should be sent from England or Jamaica to seize the Port and Island for the Crown of England".<sup>22</sup>

This continued opposition from the English companies, parliament and King (itself an indication that they genuinely feared the Scottish company could succeed) severely hampered the Company's attempts to generate financial and political support in continental Europe. The Company also seem to have excluded the Spanish from their calculations, who very soon after the first settlement at Caledonia recognised "the very serious consequences which would arise were [Scotland] to establish themselves in those dominions".<sup>23</sup> This hostile response was in the future, however, by which time the Scots had begun to put into practice the kind of colony they wanted to establish.

### Darien as a state

A great deal of emphasis was laid at the time, and has been since, on this scheme being an essentially commercial undertaking embarked on by a Company.<sup>24</sup> In this sense, the Company of Scotland, while having a novel ambition, was nonetheless part of a wider European pattern of imperial engagement. The Dutch, the English, and the French, as well as sundry smaller states, all used this means of establishing a foreign trade.

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<sup>21</sup> Prebble, *Darien Disaster*, p. 79; Saxe Bannister (Ed), *The Writings of William Paterson, founder of the Bank of England*, New York, Augustus M. Kelley, 1968, first published 1859, vol.1, pp. xxi-xxvi; David Armitage, "Paterson, William (1658-1719)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21538>, accessed 10.03.2009; Lionel Wafer, "A new voyage and description of the Isthmus of America", Oxford, Hakluyt Society, series 2, vol. 73, 1934.

<sup>22</sup> Calendar of State Papers, colonial series: America and West Indies, 1696-97 (hereafter CSPPC), London, 1904, p. 599.

<sup>23</sup> The Council of the Indies to His Majesty [Charles II], 12 February 1699, Hart, *Disaster of Darien*, p. 252

<sup>24</sup> Fry, "Commercial empire".

Often these companies were more geographically focused than the Scottish one, or limited to either trade or plantation.<sup>25</sup>

Rather than this enterprise being regarded as one undertaken by a company as an instrument of national or imperial policy, however, it was one in which the company began to act like a state in itself under the composite Williamite monarchy. In this sense it parallels a recent hypothesis about the English East India Company which argued that before Plassey in 1757, it was not "a commercial body or an arm of the Anglo-British state but an independent form of polity and political community".<sup>26</sup> As the Company turned its attention to Darien in 1696, it caused a shift away from a purely commercial policy towards the creation of Caledonia, populated not by Scots, but (as they styled themselves) by Caledonians. In December 1698, shortly after the fleet's arrival in Panama, the Council decreed that "we do ... call this Country by the name of CALEDONIA; and ourselves ... by the name of CALEDONIANS."<sup>27</sup>

The Company's founding Act set out a whole range of powers that effectively established a state apparatus and to which further innovations were later added. In political terms, the Company was granted rights to property and government in land, sea and their resources in areas where it came to settle and trade. The geographical extent was limited to anywhere in America, Asia and Africa not already settled by Europeans. Scots could settle where indigenous populations already lived, provided it was with their consent. The Company had the right to use force of arms to defend its interests or to make reprisals, and could conclude peace treaties with other powers in America, Asia and Africa.

Caledonia's powers were reinforced further in July 1698. The Council of the colony of Caledonia was initially selected by the Company in Edinburgh and seven men were appointed and given "full power to appoint and constitute all Officers Civil and Military, by Sea or Land". On their arrival in Caledonia, however, they were instructed to divide the "freeman" inhabitants into constituencies that would elect a representative to a new parliament or council-general. For migrants in the

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<sup>25</sup> Griffiths, *A Licence to Trade*.

<sup>26</sup> Philip J. Stern, "'A politie of civill & military power': political thought and the late seventeenth-century foundations of the East India Company-state", *Journal of British Studies*, 47, 2 (2008), pp. 253-283.

<sup>27</sup> "The declaration of the council", 28 December 1698, in Hart, *Disaster of Darien*, pp. 226-229. The quote is on p. 228.

first fleet, this represented at least universal male suffrage, since all were free and all were to be allocated at least 50 acres of "plantable land" as well as a town plot.<sup>28</sup>

The colony also had extensive economic powers and privileges. As well as having the rights to shipping and trade to and from its possessions, the Company could impose duties and customs. It could thus effectively develop a fiscal policy to it give a revenue raising capacity beyond simple commercial profit. This went further than the practice relatively recently established in Barbados by the right of the assembly to raise a 4½ per cent duty on exports, a privilege which was regarded by later colonies as central to their relationship to London and, consequently, jealously guarded by them.<sup>29</sup> The Company was empowered to enter into commercial treaties and could also delegate its powers, to allow such trade and commerce as it deemed necessary or desirable.

Over all this, the King was sovereign, and it was to him that the Company and its officers remained answerable. Even so, Caledonia believed itself empowered to attack Spain (in clear contravention of William's European diplomatic efforts) as the Council pointed out in March 1699. The Company ship *Dolphin* had run aground off Cartagena and had been seized by the Spanish authorities as a pirate ship. The Council demanded the return of the ship, its crew and cargo. Should the Spanish fail to comply, the Council asserted it would "by force of arms, both by sea and land, set upon, take and apprehend any of the men, ships, goods, moneys, and merchandizes of his Catholick Majesty...by way of reprisal and pignoration". They were clearly aware of the threats they were making, warning that "the dangerous consequences that may happen, will justlie by laid to your charge and required att your hands."<sup>30</sup> Apart from demonstrating a reckless lack of judgement in threatening the major imperial power in the region, this episode clearly showed the extent to which the Scottish settlement regarded itself as a powerful and legitimate polity in its own right.

The following sections highlight four issues in particular that comprise the Caledonian state's most striking aspects and which allow us

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<sup>28</sup> See "Appointment of the council of the colony", 12 July 1698, in Burton, *Darien Papers*, pp. 49-53; Prebble, *Darien Disaster*, p. 100.

<sup>29</sup> Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World*, pp 151-153.

<sup>30</sup> Letter by the Council of Caledonia to the Governour of Cartagena, 11 March 1699 in Burton, *Darien Papers*, p. 92.

to explore the potential for the idea of Scottish 'doubles'. They are the right of non-Scots to naturalisation in the colony; religious toleration; relationships with the indigenous Tule population; and slavery.

## Naturalisation

The act of the Scottish parliament establishing the company specifically enshrined "all that shall settle to Inhabit, or be born" in the Company's territories "shall be repute as Natives of this Kingdom, and have the Priviledges thereof", and this principle was repeated in a series of documents in 1698 and 1699. Paterson had put it more clearly in August 1695: "whatever Nation or Religion a man be (if one of us) he ought to be looked upon to be of the same Interest and Inclination."<sup>31</sup> The rationale for this was quite clear: that human capital (and indeed the financial capital they might bring) was going to be important in establishing Caledonia as a viable entity. The advantage of naturalisation was that the colony could expand, and quickly, without necessarily draining the Scottish population. Caledonia's promoters were quick to draw on the precedent of Rome in arguing that this policy of naturalisation had encouraged it to flourish.

This openness offered quite a counterblast to mercantilist assumptions – all the major European powers in this period were anxious to secure trade in their own ships for their own nationals. This prospect of a huge free port (large enough for "1000 of the best ships in the world") in the heart of Spanish America was worrying for all the European powers, despite the Caledonians' attempts to convince them they were no threat.<sup>32</sup> And it is clear that naturalisation as well as free access played a part in these fears. The governor of Jamaica wrote back to London shortly after the arrival of the Scots, "if they settle here and are healthy, the noise of gold (of which there is plenty in those parts) will carry away all our debtors, servants and ordinary people in hope of mending their fortunes, and will much weaken what little strength we have."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190 emphasis added; Paterson to Robert Chievely, 9 July 1695, in Burton, *Darien Papers*, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> Mr Rose's Journal, in Burton, *Darien Papers*, p. 65.

<sup>33</sup> Sir William Beeston, Jamaica, to the Council for Trade and Plantations, CSPC, 1697-1698, p. 568.

In promoting naturalisation as a means of encouraging immigration, Caledonia demonstrated its commitment to the establishment of a permanent settlement in Panama, which, as the proposed land grants indicate, was intended to be agrarian as well as a mercantile entrepot. If naturalisation indicated that the Company's imperial ambitions were more than simply commercial, it also implied the creation of a community that displayed a greater diversity than Scottish society. It is certainly the case that non-Scots lived in Scotland and were integrated in Scottish society in the seventeenth century, but the logic of naturalisation meant that Caledonia's population was likely to diverge from Scotland's, rather than be its double.<sup>34</sup>

This idea can be reinforced by another element of Caledonia. While a putative diverse population might come to be naturalised, their immediate conversion to Scottish norms could not be assumed. The second aspect of Caledonian society, religious toleration, would ease significantly this transition.

### Religious toleration

Caledonia offered its residents "a full and free liberty of Conscience in the matter of Religion", while at the same time reserving the authorities' rights to punish transgressors including murderers, thieves, rapists, rebels, blasphemers, or those who were merely disrespectful or disobedient towards their "superior officers".<sup>35</sup> This firm tone suggests a powerful influence from Scottish religion, not least from the Church of Scotland, members of which had become increasingly concerned with moral decline and who saw in Caledonia the chance to forge a purer, more godly society.<sup>36</sup> It also represented a desire in the Company and its settlers to secure a Williamite colony. A number of the soldiers among the settlers had taken part in the massacre at Glencoe, while some of the key Directors came with long-standing connections to

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<sup>34</sup> 'Introduction', Eds. A. Grosjean and S. Murdoch, *Scottish Communities Abroad in the Early Modern Period*, Leiden, Brill, 2005, p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> "Declaration of the Council", in Hart, *Disaster of Darien*, pp. 228-229; "Rules and ordinances", in Burton, *Darien Papers*, pp. 113-119.

<sup>36</sup> T.C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People 1560-1830*, London, Fontana 1969, pp. 74-81.

the revolutionary and Protestant successions.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, there was a growing weariness in Scotland about continual religious strife and in this context, a society clearly led by Presbyterianism but still tolerant of other forms of religiosity, seemed an attractive proposition. In other words, like earlier New England settlers, Scots were seeking creation of a morally purer, but more tolerant and peaceable society, as well as the "key to the universe".

Yet religious toleration was not simply a reflection of Scotland, or its failings. The influences emerging from the political and religious turmoil of later seventeenth-century Scotland were melded with a set of wider impulses drawn from the development of the New England colonies and their rhetoric of the creation of a "new Jerusalem". William Paterson is a key link in this regard. Paterson's Victorian biographer argued that he spent time in the Bahamas whence he traded to New England, and came to know Roger Williams, the prominent and controversial New England minister, who founded Providence in Rhode Island.<sup>38</sup> Williams is perhaps best known for his approach to religious toleration, which was also to be a feature of Caledonia. In a now well-known analogy, Williams suggested that if society were regarded as a ship on which were people of different religions, none could be compelled to observe the religion of the ship, nor be barred from their own forms of worship. Nonetheless, the ship's captain had the right "to command the ship's course...and also to command that justice, peace and sobriety, be kept and practiced among the seamen and all the passengers". Finally, he argued that captains 'may judge, resist, compel and punish such transgressors', a phrase that resonated through Caledonia's strictures against those who violated its rules.<sup>39</sup>

This application of ideas from one part of the English-speaking Atlantic World to another offers a powerful qualification to the notion of "doubles". As Scots tried to settle a new colony, they certainly drew on traditions, mores and practices from Scotland, but Caledonia's society

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<sup>37</sup> D. J. Patrick and C. A. Whatley, "Persistence, principle and patriotism in the making of the Union of 1707: the revolution, Scottish Parliament and the squadron volante", *History*, 92 (2007), p. 178. See also J. R. Young, "The Scottish parliament and the politics of empire: Parliament and the Darien project, 1695-1707", *Parliaments, Estates & Representation*, 27 (2007), pp. 175-190.

<sup>38</sup> Bannister, Ed., *The writings of William Paterson*, vol. 1, p. xxii.

<sup>39</sup> Francis J. Bremer, "Williams, Roger", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29544>, accessed 06.10.2008.

was also to emerge from the wider Atlantic world of which Scots were a part.

### Tule population

If Roman precedent had been useful in regard to naturalisation, it was more problematic in other areas, given the levels of violence associated with Roman legions. The Scots wanted to create what they regarded as an essentially benign empire – the entrepot at Caledonia was meant to enable Scots to control global trade and maritime affairs “without being liable to the fatigues, expences and dangers, or contracting the Guilt and blood of Alexander and Caesar”.<sup>40</sup>

This does not necessarily imply they had no intention to settle, but instead that they planned to plant a colony in uninhabited territory or that which was not claimed by another European power. In other parts of the world, powerful local rulers prevented wholesale European incursions, but in the Americas, by and large, indigenous groups had been unable to resist European settlement. The Scots went further than this, however, and promoted the idea of a peaceable consensual empire; enshrined in the Act was the notion that occupied territory could be settled provided it was with the “consent of the native and inhabitants thereof”.<sup>41</sup> Penny-pinching was certainly a factor and the company was anxious to avoid the military costs and blood-letting that had resulted from fractious relationships between colonists and Native Americans to the north. It was also a sensible move. The local Tule Indians were adept at playing off one European power against another, and although they over-estimated Scottish capabilities, they saw in Caledonia a means to improving their position with the Spanish. The Spanish were keenly aware of this noting that “it may be justifiably feared from the unreliable character and natural perversity of the Darien Indians that they will assist the Scots in their purpose”. For the Scots, too, the Tule were crucial in their attempts to fend off Spanish attack.<sup>42</sup> Diplomatically, the presence

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<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Armitage, “Scottish vision of empire”, p. 104.

<sup>41</sup> Burton, *Darien Papers*, p. 49.

<sup>42</sup> Council of the Indies to His Majesty [Charles II], 12 February 1699 in Hart, *Disaster of Darien*, p. 252. The best study of relations between Europeans and Tule groups is Ignacio Gallup-Díaz, *The door of the seas and the key to the universe: Indian politics and imperial rivalry in the Darién, 1640-1750*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2005, see especially pp. 75-112.



of a coherent Tule group who could be regarded as having the capacity to grant Scottish access was of great importance. Caledonia was right in the middle of Spanish America, and the Spaniards were wholly opposed to the Scottish presence. It was therefore critical for Scots to be able to argue they were there with the consent of a credible local authority – the Tule provided Caledonia with its legitimacy.<sup>43</sup>

For political and financial reasons, a consensual approach was a wise one. But there may also have been a more moral concern. Not only were Scots not going to wage war on other peoples, Caledonia's laws made clear that Indian rights were to be respected: stealing from Indians was to be regarded as any other form of theft and could be punishable by death.<sup>44</sup> Here William Paterson is again important. In the early sixteenth century the Spanish cleric Bartolomé de Las Casas had written powerful denunciations of the dreadful treatment of Indians under the *encomienda* system in Spanish America, and was instrumental in improving their condition. At the same time, he was also among the first to make a case for the enslavement of Africans as a replacement for Indian labour. Paterson's library contained, among other treatises on Indians, some of Las Casas' work, notably *Relacion de las destruccion de las Indias*, and may have been influenced by it.<sup>45</sup>

Moreover, he is likely to have been further influenced by ideas from North America. Roger Williams' approach to founding a colony was driven, in part, by a desire to maintain honourable relations with the Native American populations. Whether the young Paterson ever met the elderly Williams is hard to prove, but Paterson certainly had strong links to New England, and to the dissenting tradition: his first wife, who died in New England, had been the widow of another American dissenting minister, Thomas Bridge. In other words, Paterson was tied into a religious network in North America that had a tradition of supporting indigenous populations, and which, in turn, came to influence Caledonia's official position.

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<sup>43</sup> Bridget McPhail, "Through a glass, darkly: Scots and Indians converge at Darien", *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 18, 3 (1994), pp. 129-147. For a discussion of the Spanish response, see Storrs, "Disaster at Darien (1698-1700)?", pp. 5-38.

<sup>44</sup> "Rules and Ordinances for the government of the colony", 24 April 1699, in Burton, *Darien Papers*, p. 116.

<sup>45</sup> Bannister, Ed., *The Writings of William Paterson*, vol. 3: Paterson's library.

## Slavery

The enslavement of Africans is rarely discussed in relation to Caledonia, even though this was a Company founded to trade with Africa, and which then decided to settle a colony on the Caribbean basin, where slavery was well-established as the main mode of labour. Among the mercantile subscribers to the Company, far more came from Edinburgh than Glasgow.<sup>46</sup> They outnumbered them 132 to 74 and invested more than twice as much; and their real interest was in African trade. While Africans traded commodities other than slaves – gold and ivory are but two – by the 1690s human cargoes were the main targets for Europeans and it is very clear that the Company envisaged a trade in slaves as well as gold. In May 1696, after the subscription books were open, the Company's Committee of Improvements in Edinburgh proposed that as well as investigating trades to Greenland and Archangel, "a letter may be written to Mr James Smith, or to whom they shall think fit to send to this Committee, an account of a suteable Cargo to the Golden Coast of Africa, another to the Negro Coast...". In response, they heard from a Mr Brounc, "repute of good skill" in the African trade, who provided a list of "staple commoditys generally inquired for and most commonly sold in Barter for slaves at [Whydah] and are sufficient to purchase 450 negroes". The Company was evidently sufficiently impressed to place an order and in October – after Darien had been decided upon – two ships, the *Isobel* and the *Lyon* arrived in Leith from London carrying the kinds of commodities useful in the slave trade: copper bars, black arm-rings, guns and "43 Cutlasses or broad Swords for Guinea or the West Indies".<sup>47</sup>

It is less clear whether the Company envisaged breaking the Royal African Company's monopoly and trading Africans to a series of colonies in the Americas, perhaps using Caledonia as an entrepot, or whether the Africans were required primarily as a labour force in the colony; either to transport goods across the isthmus or to work the various plantations. That this labour was regarded as central to Caledonia's prosperity, and its failure to materialise may adversely have affected the chances of the colony's survival may be detected in a remark reported by the Jamaican governor 40 years later, that the Scots would not have left had they had "100 negroes" to construct "works to fortify

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<sup>46</sup> Watt, *Price of Scotland*, p. 56.

<sup>47</sup> Burton, *Darien Papers*, p. 32; Insh, *Company of Scotland*, pp. 68-69.

themselves and likewise in planting provisions, for want of which only the Scottish expedition failed".<sup>48</sup>

If slavery was imagined as an important feature of life in Caledonia, it brought certain contradictions. How, for example, could enslavement sit alongside the three mantras of naturalisation, religious toleration and Tule diplomacy? It seems unlikely that there would have been much resistance to the idea of slavery, or to the enslavement of Africans. In 1698, Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun discussed the idea of reintroducing a form of slavery in Scotland as a solution to problems created by vagabonds, while a little later, there was a growing general assumption that any African in Scotland was likely to have been a slave: a "strolling negro" was assumed to have absconded rather than being at liberty.<sup>49</sup> Put simply, the injunction that "all that shall settle or be born" in the colony were to enjoy the same rights as "natural-born" Scots, was clearly not intended to apply to Africans recently arrived via the horrors of the Middle Passage. This understanding of a difference between enslaved African and free Caledonian is likely to have applied equally to slave children born in the colony. At the same time, Caledonians were perfectly clear that "It shall be death to steal, or forcibly carry or convey away from the Colony or its dependencies, any man, woman, or child" – a punishment they did not apply to those who took men, women or children away from Africa.

## Conclusion

Once established, Caledonia was meant to become a fulcrum for global commerce, as an entrepot through which the commodities of the East and West Indies would flow. While it was forged in an Atlantic context, it was also intended, as Paterson put it, to be the "door to the seas" beyond. In many ways Caledonia represented a dynamic and ambitious approach to empire. In emphasizing that the settlement of land was in part a means to secure control over the sea, the Scots tried to use Caledonia as the basis for a maritime empire. As Fletcher of Saltoun put

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<sup>48</sup> Governor Edward Trelawny to Duke of Newcastle, 8 August 1739, CSPC, vol. 65 (1739), p. 160.

<sup>49</sup> Fletcher discussed slavery in "The second discourse concerning the affairs of Scotland", Ed, D. Daiches *Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun: selected political writings and speeches*, Edinburgh, Scottish Academic Press, 1979, pp. 46-58; Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World*, p. 210.

it, "The Sea is the only empire which can naturally belong to us. Conquest is not our interest".<sup>50</sup> This was a recognition of Scotland's inability to secure and sustain large swathes of overseas territory around the world.

Ultimately, of course, the settlement at Caledonia disappeared without the full force of the Spanish empire being employed. News of the loss of the first colony arrived after the second fleet had left and it, too, succumbed to tropical disease, internal bickering, wilful opposition by the English, and outright hostility from Spain which could not be expected to allow Scotland to base its rise to global dominance in Spanish America without a response: a fleet of ten ships with 4800 troops were readied to attack Caledonia. Paterson's dreams were left in tatters as the colony was abandoned for the second and last time in April 1700. Of the 2500 settlers, perhaps as many as 2000 lost their lives, and in these terms the venture was catastrophic. It also dashed, for the final time, any hope of an independent Scottish empire and showed, beyond all reasonable doubt, that the prevailing British constitutional arrangements were unworkable and unsustainable. In financial terms, there was certainly a serious loss of capital, but that was ultimately recouped through the 'Equivalent' with the Act of Union.<sup>51</sup>

In the end, the failure of the scheme came down to one truly fundamental misjudgement. In trying to create a cost-effective maritime empire, the Scots neglected one critical issue: maritime empires were probably more expensive than land empires. Scots entirely lacked the financial structures that so supported Amsterdam and, increasingly, London; and it lacked a navy to defend its positions and its trade. Its principal rivals had considerable resources: against the Company's fleet of six ships (which was larger than the Scottish navy), in England could muster 158 warships and cruisers, France 149, the Netherlands 114 and the Danes had 37, all in addition to their merchant navies.<sup>52</sup> Without powerful mercantile and military marines, the Scots could not hope to compete, or to be viable in the long-term.

Caledonia's demise should not, however, divert us from realising that its establishment was regarded at the time as a good and rational idea

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<sup>50</sup> Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, quoted in Armitage, *Ideological origins of the British Empire*, p. 146.

<sup>51</sup> Watt, *Price of Scotland*, chapter 17.

<sup>52</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, London, Penguin-Allen Lane, 2005, pp. 606-608.

– and indeed plans for similar schemes lingered on for another century. In 1739, in the wake of Vernon's assault on Porto Bello, Governor Trelawny of Jamaica, prompted by John Campbell (a survivor of Caledonia and then a member of the Jamaica Council), wrote to the Duke of Newcastle proposing that "a settlement at Darien might well be made with two men-of-war and 500 landmen", and adding that "private people would be willing to undertake and able to effect the conquest of it, if they were allowed the property of what they conquer".<sup>53</sup> The scale of public investment and the clearly hostile responses of other powers should tell us Caledonia was widely regarded as having a good chance of surviving. That it did not, should not deflect attention from the kind of society Caledonia was meant to become. In all they did, Caledonians were attuned to the wider intellectual influences around them, even if they seemed blind to some of the more obvious diplomatic and political forces. Scots at Darien did not just try to create a double. Instead they sought to adapt themselves in a colonial setting using the things from home that worked and blending them with international and colonial influences and innovations. Ultimately, after Union, it was this blend of tradition and assimilation that provided the basis for successful Scottish imperial enterprises.

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<sup>53</sup> Governor Edward Trelawny to Duke of Newcastle, 8 August 1739, CSPC, vol. 65 (1739), p. 160.