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The Scandinavian Empires in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

Johan Heinsen

Introduction

In the seventeenth century, Danish and Swedish seafarers plied the same waters, while their monarchs competed for dominion in the Baltic Sea, resulting in a series of wars between the two Scandinavian powers. Denmark (which included Norway and Iceland as well as territories in northern Germany) entered the century with the upper hand, sitting firmly on the Sound that gated the Baltic Sea and using the funds from the toll to build a state-of-the-art navy. Sweden (which included Finland and also came to include a number of possessions around the Baltic) emerged with a cutting-edge army as a serious competitor during the Thirty Years War and later in the century managed to wrestle Scania from Denmark, thereby challenging Danish claims to the toll. Both were empires but sat at the semi-periphery of a North Sea world dominated by Dutch and eventually English commercial interests. Both had ambitions to become the centre of this world, yet suffered defeat. As a result, both monarchs had to content with their middling position in European politics, presiding over huge and scattered territories, but without the capital or the populations to become major powers.

This chapter explores confluences discussed much less frequently. Both Denmark and Sweden dabbled in overseas expansion, drawing heavily on capital and know-how from the Netherlands to create miniature Atlantic empires. Sweden founded the short-lived colony of New Sweden in North America, while the Danes established small trading outposts in India and on the Gold Coast, and, eventually, settled a Caribbean colony on St Thomas in the Lesser Antilles. Both states used convicts to meet the needs for labour across the Atlantic Ocean. They did so at times when their colonies suffered from bad reputations at home and, therefore, failed to attract free migrants and indentured servants. In this way, convicts were a solution to labour problems in the face of contingencies. Additionally, convicts allowed Danish and Swedish authorities to populate their colonies with non-foreigners at times when Dutch influences were seen as a threat. In both empires convicts were repeatedly referred to as 'slaves', and their labour appears to have been a replacement for other types of unfree labour. However, this is where the similarities end, as the two fashioned very different systems regarding

such convicts. The convicts themselves also had very different experiences, owing both to the difference in the social structure of the two colonies and to the environmental differences between the temperate climate of New Sweden and the tropical disease environment of St Thomas.

Both of these systems led to the transportation of very small numbers of convicts. In light of some of the other flows discussed in this volume, they are quantitatively negligible. In spite of this, they add valuable insight into the role of convicts in European colonial expansion in the early modern period. In many ways, convicts were propelled into these miniature Atlantic economies by some of the same forces that took convicts to the colonies of the much larger European competitors. Principally, they reveal how convict labour was intertwined with other forms of free and unfree labour.¹ In this way, these two small-scale operations help us recognize both patterns and deviations within the larger context of colonial and even global history.

This article examines these two systems, the labour problems they were designed to counter and the experiences they forced on the coerced, before turning to a discussion of their similarities and differences that help place them in a larger European context. It will be argued, that Sweden's experiment in convict transportation had much clearer European precedents than the Danish, which had several features that were unique for its time. Some of these features have to do with differences in how convict transportation was grafted to the two states' quite different penal systems. Thus, Denmark had a prison system that, for its time, was highly centralized – something which meant that there was a pool of convict labour in Copenhagen available for transportation when the need arose. Sweden had a less centralized penal system, which resulted in a model that compares more easily to other European states of the period. Other differences, however, are more difficult to explain and might be the products of contingencies.

Finally, this chapter also discusses the challenges of knowing the histories of these convicts as they became part of their respective empires. The convicts in the Danish Empire are heavily documented in the sources; a fact that can be linked to the powerful anxieties their agency provoked even long after this experiment ended. These anxieties sculpted the project itself, and in part helped provoke the abandonment of convict transportation across the Atlantic. In contrast, the Swedish sources on the brief Swedish experiment suggests a less panicked social imaginary that, in turn, makes the experiences of the coerced more difficult to unearth.

From Gothenburg to Delaware

New Sweden was a small, short-lived colony on the western side of the Delaware. The first settlers arrived from Sweden in late March 1638 and established a fort, Fort Christina, named after the Swedish ruler. The colony eventually came to include a number of forts, outposts and small settlements in the region that today includes Delaware, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. It was taken over by the Dutch in 1655.

During this seventeen-year period, the colony was overseen by a trading company, The New Sweden Company, which operated out of Gothenburg – at the time Sweden's

Map 4.1 The Atlantic flows of the Scandinavian empires in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

only port in the narrow sea of Kattegat and the only Swedish gateway to the Atlantic that did not go through waters controlled by the Danes. The initial plan for the colony was to plant and harvest tobacco and to engage in the fur trade. Initially, much of the capital and many of the migrants came from the Netherlands, but Dutch investors withdrew their interest after the initial voyage proved a costly venture that provided no real returns on their investment. This forced a re-organization of The New Sweden Company, and a much more active recruitment strategy, seeking Swedish subjects to populate the colony. The use of convicts emerges as part of this plan in the summer of 1639.²

At this point, the Swedish authorities faced difficulties in recruiting migrants to act as their colonial labourers. Colonial indenture did not lure in great numbers of lower-class subjects. Scholars have tied these difficulties to widespread beliefs that America was a dreadful place.³ In this way, the use of convicts appears tied to a question of labour scarcity; convicts were substitutes for indentured servants. At the same time, providing sufficient numbers of migrants from Sweden was itself a means of control. The Swedish colony was located in an area that was highly contested. The Swedes rubbed up against both British and Dutch. Swedish concerns about keeping their colony Swedish manifested in many ways: for instance, Governor Johan Printz (who ruled the colony from 1643 to 1653) was instructed that he was to enforce Swedish as the main language of the colony.⁴ These concerns also influenced recruitment efforts. One of the earliest appearances of the idea of using convicts as colonists, a letter from August 1639 from the Privy Council (which ruled the country as an interim

government until 1644 when Queen Christina had come of age and took over the government) to the county governor of the Swedish province of Wärmaland, specifically mentions the need of populating the colony with Swedish subjects.⁵ Such intertwined objectives in the use of coerced migrants are logical when looking at the organizational impetus behind it. While organized as a trading company, the interests of the New Sweden Company were intimately tied to the interests of the Swedish crown. This was no coincidence, as the men who served on the Queen's Privy Council were also the major Swedish investors in the company.⁶ Impetus to use convicts appears to have come from the Privy Council, principally from Axel Oxenstierna, Sweden's Lord High Chancellor and one of the leaders of the New Sweden Company. The use of convicts must be situated at this interstitial point between the interests of a trading company facing labour shortages and the state.

The organization of convict transportation was always very provisional in the Swedish case. It was undertaken locally by the governors of the counties around Gothenburg after they had been ordered to do so by the Privy Council. Such orders specified who should be transported and under what conditions. The above-mentioned letter to the county governor of Wärmaland suggested that criminals who had families and who had been convicted of desertion in Wärmaland or Älvsborg or those who had in other ways committed crimes worthy of life sentences were to be sent to Gothenburg to be sent to New Sweden. The authorities were to instruct the convict that he had been granted his life. Further, because the wives and children were innocent, the authorities were ordered to be careful and persuasive so as not to cause an uproar among their kin.⁷ Again in June 1641, the Privy Council called for deserters to be transported.⁸ Recalcitrant soldiers and officers were also singled out.⁹ In this way, many of the orders concerned military personnel. For instance, a young horseman from Västergötland by the name of Hans Månsson was deported to New Sweden after having felled six apple trees and two cherry trees at the orchard of a monastery. As the local authority asked the queen what to do with him, it was decided that deportation was a befitting punishment. Thus, he was confronted with the choice: to go with his family to New Sweden to work for six years or be hanged.¹⁰ However, convicted civilians were also transported. We find instances of people transported for petty crimes but also more serious matters such as poaching and adultery. Per Michelsson from Hammarby, for instance, left Gothenburg on a ship in 1643 to serve six years for having spread "hard and rebellious words" about a sheriff.¹¹ No women were chosen, nor any common thieves.¹² The latter seems a conscious decision because theft was a highly dishonouring crime which meant that thieves were shunned as their dishonour could rub off on others. Both these selection criteria stood in marked contrast to the Danes.

The ad hoc way that convict transportation became part of colonization of New Sweden suggests that convicts were seen as an intermediate solution to an urgent problem, not an integral part of the project. Transportation was never extended as a sentence available to Swedish courts in general. Instead, the use of convicts appears in connection only with concrete recruitment efforts as the voyages were prepared.

Karen Ordahl Kupperman has argued that Swedish colonization in North America 'could take advantage of decades of Spanish, French, Dutch, and English experience'.¹³ Not only did backers and political leaders appear inspired by such precedents, but the

fact that the colony's initial leadership was primarily Dutch (having strong connections to the Dutch West India Company), further facilitated such a transfer of knowledge. Kupperman traces such an impact in the privateering and Caribbean trade schemes that featured heavily in the initial plans for the colony and were to make up for initial losses. I would argue that such an inspiration is also apparent in the way Swedish authorities solved the problem of migrant/labour shortages by using convicts. Here, as elsewhere in the project, the Swedes appear to have been inspired by the British.¹⁴ This shows in how they used convicts as indentured servants, serving terms of up to six years as unfree labourers.¹⁵ Of course, Swedish officials had their own experiences with the utilization of criminals in expansionist contexts as well; after the conquest of Ingria in the Baltic in 1617, rebellious peasants and people guilty of damaging forests had been banished there to help settle it with Swedish subjects.¹⁶ However, the specific construction of the convict as an indentured servant, bound and (at least in principle) sellable for a set number of years, hints at an outside influence, most likely to be British. The Danes did not follow such precedents, demonstrating that the status of the convict as a colonial labourer could easily have taken other forms.

The number of convicts in New Sweden is impossible to accurately determine, as convict status does not always figure directly on the surviving passenger lists. However, we can say with some certainty that they made up only a minority of the roughly 600 people who left for New Sweden in the period. Historian Sten Carlsson has identified twenty colonists who were expressly called 'criminals' or 'convicts' in the documents but estimates that the total number was 'much higher'.¹⁷

Various sources indicate that the convicts were called 'slaves'. While both convict labour and indenture was often called 'slavery' as a way of criticizing it in the larger European overseas empires, both Danish and Swedish authorities used the term 'slave' in a different way. The term simply came to signify convict labourers. In Sweden, the word 'slave', was already used about convicts performing hard labour in this way in the 1640s, so it is not surprising to find their colonial equivalents designated by the term.¹⁸ We are more surprised that Governor Johan Printz (who ruled from 1643 to 1655) also appears to have used the term about regular indentured labourers.¹⁹

Tracing the experiences of these colonial labourers is almost impossible. The sources shedding light on daily life in New Sweden are few and almost none of them deal with the worlds of the subaltern. However, from the writings of Governor Printz and others we get glimpses that allow us to at least contemplate what colonial transportation entailed. They hint at a life of destitution. Hunger was a very real threat and a failed harvest in 1643 killed a quarter of the colonists, taking a decidedly class-based toll among the lowest rungs of the small community whom Printz admitted had also suffered from the hardships of labour.²⁰ The rebellious convict Per Michelsson was among those buried that year.²¹ Plots of desertion appear to have been omnipresent – possibly a response to Printz's rule which has been portrayed as quite brutal.²² Convicts were probably sometimes hired out, as their labour power was owned by the company. We know that this happened to the company's indentured servants and soldiers, mirroring practices elsewhere in American colonies. Most of the time, however, convicts laboured directly for the company, performing heavy physical labour and plantation work in the efforts of planting tobacco on the company's plantations. We

only know of a single enslaved African in the colony, so the convicts made up its lowest class. An eighteenth-century description of New Sweden building on now lost eyewitness accounts divided the colony into three groups, the free, the indentured and the convicts. The author argued that the convicts made up a separate class and were 'employed in digging the earth, throwing up trenches, and erecting walls and other fortifications.'²³ This rings true, as Printz engaged upon ambitious building work and fort construction upon his arrival. Other convicts appear to have been singled out to work as soldiers, but in practice this might also have entailed military construction work as well.²⁴ Heavy labour in construction work and on fortifications was not an uncommon punishment for convicts in seventeenth-century Sweden. An ordinance of 1642 called for convicts to be sent to the nearest fortress to do hard labour.²⁵ Printz, who left Sweden in late 1642, might have been following this ordinance, or perhaps he simply used the convicts to solve whatever labour shortages the colony faced. The above-mentioned account then goes on to add that others, 'had no intercourse with them; but a particular spot was appointed for them to reside upon.'²⁶ However, this detail is dubious, as their labour was often performed side by side with the indentured as well as soldiers. Contact was inevitable. However, it does raise the question of the convicts' status in the colony.

Convicts were bound to labour for a number of years in the service of the company in a way that mimicked indenture. However, they were represented as a separate social group in the writings of Printz. This manifested in various ways. While all the convicts appear to have had a set end-date on their labours, this does not appear to have mattered greatly in practice. In 1647, Printz wrote to Oxenstierna asking for how long the 'criminals' were to serve without wages. Oxenstierna replied to him that he would leave it to Printz's 'discretions'. Those who performed well could be allowed wages and, it appears, gain the status of free men. However, 'those who go on in the same wrong way as before, and [do] not exhibit any improvement, may have their punishment increased by you, Sir Governor, or may continue to serve without wages.'²⁷ In this way, Printz held a great deal of power over the lives of the convicts – a power he does not appear to have had over the indentured proper. This introduced legal arbitrariness. In her discussion of convict status in the British colonies of the period, Lauren Benton has asserted that the legal status of convicts after transportation was 'to be worked out in practice.'²⁸ This statement holds true in the case of Sweden as well, and we will also see it apply to the status of convicts in the Danish West Indies.

Yet, despite the introduction of arbitrariness, we should not exaggerate the difference between convicts' experiences and those of the indentured. More often than not, the two groups appear in the sources as one, often simply termed 'labourers'. The indentured are likely to have experienced arbitrariness as well. Besides, the two groups did more or less the same work. Further, the colony did afford the convicts the opportunity to move beyond their convict status. Printz had great power over when to release convicts, but we do know that he in fact did do so, sooner or later. From the rolls of inhabitants, we see how the convicts did eventually become either paid labourers or freemen.²⁹ Further, after gaining their freedom, these convicts appear to have become fully fledged members of the small community. Historians have noted how quite a few ex-convicts rose to prominent positions. Perhaps most notably, the

horseman Hans Månsson transported for cutting down fruit trees eventually gained his freedom and became a captain. Such social mobility is, again, in marked contrast to the experiences of Danish convicts.³⁰

One last group of migrants to New Sweden deserve mention in this context, as they further blur the line between free and coerced. This was a group consisting of the so-called 'Forest Finns'. Originally migrants from the province of Savonia in eastern Finland, these had migrated into Sweden and Norway around the turn of the century, sustaining themselves through a process of slash-and-burn cultivation, turning forests into fields by burning them and planting grains in the ashes. However, as the Swedish authorities came to perceive timber as a valuable resource (in part due to a burgeoning iron industry), such practices became frowned upon. By the late 1630s, there were reports of a number of conflicts, as the Finns did not stop their practices despite being ordered to do so by the crown. The Finns came to be seen as a social, cultural and economic threat that had to be dealt with. Those Finns who did not either settle or go back to Finland were increasingly criminalized and seen as vagrants to be prosecuted.³¹ The colony became another solution. From 1640 onwards, the county governors of several of the counties where Finns had settled, were ordered by the crown to do their utmost to recruit Finns. For instance, Gustav Lejonhuvud who was county governor of Örebro, was ordered in 1640 to give land to those of the Finns he trusted and to attempt to persuade the rest to migrate with their families to New Sweden. Of course, there was an element of coercion involved, as Lejonhuvud was to bring those he could not persuade to court.³² This effectively meant that the Finns were faced with the constrained choice to settle, to migrate or to become convicts. At times, such coercion even became explicit: a letter from the queen to Olof Stake, county governor of Värmland, commended his efforts in recruiting Finns to New Sweden. Apparently, Stake had rounded up a considerable group of Finns and arrested them in the town of Carlstad. Those who still refused the offer were not to be released unless already-settled farmers vouched that the Finns would settle proper farmlands. Unable to provide such sureties they were simply to be forced to go either to New Sweden or to be put in irons and work on crown land.³³

Transportation of Finns solved two problems: it provided highly suitable labour to the colony and it gave Swedish authorities a way to deal with a minority that had become a social problem. Whereas the number of regular convicts is very small, the Finns made up a larger portion of the colony's inhabitants. In the colony, their agricultural skills and their practice in turning forests into farmland proved very useful. Despite migrating under threat of force, there is nothing to suggest that they were seen as a lesser group in the colony. It even seems as if the large numbers of Finns coaxed or coerced into migrating alleviated the need for convicts proper by the early 1650s. At this point large numbers of Finns appear to have agreed to migrate.³⁴ A Swedish traveller going to New Sweden described how in 1653 there were so many families ready to cross the Atlantic at Gothenburg that those migrants who were found to have had criminal pasts were left in Sweden. Even then there were too many, and more than 100 families of 'honest people' had to be left behind as well. This, the traveller asserted, was a marked change, as he explained how criminals had previously been used when the colony was still new and people feared the voyage. The veracity of his claim is,

however, difficult to assess, as the manuscript in which it appeared seems written as a piece of colonial propaganda.³⁵

From Copenhagen to St Thomas

Whereas Sweden left the game of overseas expansion with the loss of New Sweden in 1655, Denmark–Norway created an overseas empire whose phantom remains until today.³⁶ Convicts played a crucial part in the establishment of this empire, although they brought a marked tension to it.

Denmark–Norway became a contender in the European race for colonial possessions in 1620 when an expedition from Copenhagen established a fort at Tharangambadi in India. This settlement persisted until 1845 and was occasionally used as a site for banishment of high-profile convicts at the behest of the king. The first of these high-profile banished was Hans Lindenov, a nobleman who had been a privateer during the Kalmar War against Sweden in 1611 to 1613, but after the peace he had continued what then became outright piracy. He was sentenced to life in prison, but his sentence was later commuted to seven years of colonial servitude. Scholars have conceived of such prisoners as ‘political prisoners’. Another example underlines this. In the 1680s, the colony served as a space of confinement for Jacob Worm, a religious zealot who had been convicted of lese-majesty after penning several works criticizing absolutist rule.³⁷ After the settlement of St Thomas in the Caribbean in 1672, this also became a site for banishment of such high-profile convicts. Of the convicts transported to St Thomas in this way, several appear to have been priests as well, suggesting that this system was useful for the crown in getting religious troublemakers out of the way. There was nothing new in this practice of banishment except for the destination. However, only very few were banished to the colonies and banishment to these specific destinations never became part of the law. Those banished to the colonies at the king’s behest can probably be counted on a few hands. Instead, it is another experiment in coercion that warrants our attention here.

The tiny colony of St Thomas appears to have been envisaged as a plantation economy using unfree labour from its foundation in 1672. Tobacco, cotton and sugar were planted by the first settlers, and because of the Anglo-Dutch wars, a substantial number of Dutchmen and creoles came from the neighbouring islands to form a planter class. Some of these brought enslaved persons to work on their plantations. However, the Danish West India Company did not have a ready source for enslaved Africans for themselves. At the time of its charter in 1671, the rights to African trade, were in the hands of another trading company located in the city of Glückstadt, a Danish port in northern Germany. This might be the reason that their charter granted the West India Company authorities access to a different source of bound labour: convicts serving lifetimes of hard labour in the state’s prisons.

In order to explain this particular implementation of convict transportation, we must take a step back and understand the way it was grafted to an already existing convict flow. In the early seventeenth century, the Danish–Norwegian state had taken

increased control of the machinery of punishment. This meant the institution of new forms of penal labour directly tied to the political and military ambitions of the Danish rulers. This institutionalization of penal labour created a quantitatively small (in the scope of global history), but lasting, circulation of convicts within the Scandinavian Empire.

The result of this reconfiguration of punishment was a bifurcated system of penal labour that would only end with the advent of modern prisons in the middle of the nineteenth century. Until then, the Danish system remained split between two different types of institution that also represented two different and highly gendered ways of connecting punishment and labour: on the one hand, female felons, juvenile delinquents and vagrants were incarcerated in prison workhouses (from 1605 in Copenhagen, later elsewhere in the realm as well). In creating this system, the Danish authorities took heavy cues from the Dutch who had invented what was to become the model for these types of institution in the late sixteenth century.³⁸ On the other hand, male felons were sentenced to hard labour in military or naval institutions, either in the naval dockyard prison of Trunken (1620–1741), the military Stockhouse in Copenhagen (1741–1860), or in various military or naval fortresses throughout Denmark–Norway.

These two strands aimed at mobilizing the labour force in two quite different ways: while the prison workhouses trained their inmates in hopes of transforming the poor into a productive workforce to be of use in workshops or manufactures, in what can be conceived of as an early version of a sort of disciplinary regime (again, taking cues from the Dutch), the institutions of hard labour simply aimed at exploiting the labour of criminal bodies conceived as already lost to society. However, both read as expressions of attempts to fashion Copenhagen into an economic and military stronghold. The proto-industrial complex of the prison workhouse provided cloth for the state's military. The establishment of the naval dockyard prison was similarly motivated as the initial push for bringing larger groups of convict workers to Copenhagen around 1600 appears to have been the need for workers in constructing the military infrastructure that was key to the political ambitions of its time. They also served as galley rowers, though this was given up much earlier in Denmark than in, for instance, France or Spain.³⁹ The naval dockyard prison was established around 1620 as an institutionalization of these earlier practice of using convicts as workers at the lowest rungs of the Danish state's burgeoning naval and military machinery.⁴⁰ Such an institutionalization of convict labour appears to have been motivated in part by the intense labour shortages faced by the Danish navy in the seventeenth century.

The state-driven character of punishment meant that both Copenhagen's prison workhouse and the naval/military institutions received convicts from the entire realm, including Norway and Iceland. Thus, this metropolitan flow brought convicts to the capital, sometimes from afar. This flow was in operation from the beginning of these institutions and even preceded them in some cases. Convicts were usually shipped individually or in very small groups from the port nearest to the court where they had been sentenced. They were also transported over land, though it remains unknown if they did so in the style of chain-gangs that were a common sight in early modern Spain. For most convicts this entailed a separation from kin. Of course, the cost of

transportation also meant that local courts far from the capital were more likely to use other forms of punishment, principally corporal punishments. Looking at the inmate registers of Copenhagen's early modern prisons, it is clear that the farther away the destination the fewer the convicts.⁴¹ However, despite such incentives this trickle of convicts persisted for two and a half centuries.

Colonial transportation was grafted unto this centripetal flow. In their charter of 1671, the king granted the West India Company the right to transport 'as many of those who are convicted to our irons and prison as they [the company] find useful, and of women as many as they desire of those who for their unseemly living are brought to serve in the Spinn House [another name for the prison workhouse] or other places'.⁴² The fact that punishment was so centralized meant that there was a pool of already coerced workers at hand. While the Swedish experiment remained an ad hoc arrangement prompted by a lack of indentured servants, convict labour was part of the institutional organization of the Danish Atlantic from the beginning. This construction does not have immediate European parallels. Whereas the Swedes seem to have followed British practices, the Danes fashioned a different model of coerced labour in empire-building. However, it served the same ends, by providing colonial labourers when such workers (in this case, primarily enslaved Africans, but also indentured servants) were lacking.

However, convicts were seen only as temporary substitutes even in the Danish case. In 1674, the rights to trade in Africa were transferred from Glückstadt to The Danish West India Company, becoming then The Danish West India and Guinea Company and taking over the administration of the two Gold Coast castles then in Danish possession. Theoretically, this should have ended the need for convicts. However, every single attempt at slave trade by the company failed up until the late 1690s. This goes a long way towards explaining why the company kept using convicts well after gaining rights to slave trade.

While convicts were a replacement for enslaved Africans they also stood in as a replacement for indentured servants, as they had in the Swedish case. However, their status was fundamentally differentiated from the indentured. In no way was transportation a commutation, and there was no end date to their colonial servitude. Further, in contrast to the Swedes, it was not only a general anxiety about America that deterred recruitment of servants in the Danish case. The first expedition was a human disaster. Huge numbers of both indentured servants and convicts died in the first voyage in 1671 to 1672 and the death rate only got worse upon arrival in tropical St Thomas where sickness and starvation took heavy tolls. Of the three score of convicts on-board the first ship, only five survived beyond their first year in service of the company.⁴³ Such rates were not unique to the first voyage and overall only a few handfuls of convicts survived their first year in the colony. The indentured fared only marginally better. The governor, a man called Jørgen Iversen who had in his youth come to know colonial servitude first hand as an indentured labourer on English St Christopher, however, seemed bent on using even those who were ill in getting the colony up and running, building a fort and clearing forests for plantations. This caused mariners returning to Copenhagen from the colony to spread stories about the nightmares of colonial servitude. Soon, the company came to lament how 'among the

common people our colony is so badly spoken of that they think that as they come to serve in the West Indies they are worse off than in serving in Barbary'.⁴⁴ Indentured servitude was counted as equal to being a 'thrall or slave'.⁴⁵ Such criticism quite aptly pointed towards the interchangeability of colonial labour, and forced the company to continue looking to convicts to solve their recruitment problems. We even see this interchangeability of different groups of labourers directly in the correspondence of the company. For instance, in 1682 the company directors wrote to the king, lamenting how: 'none freely sign up to go there to serve as indentured servants; therefore, we are forced, on behalf of the company, most humbly to petition your Royal Majesty that the company should be allowed to take as many of the convicts of Holmen [the naval dockyard] which might be serviceable to the task'.⁴⁶

Over this period, the company transported between 200 and 250 convicts to St Thomas. Many of these convicts never reached their destination; death, escape and mutiny frustrated this attempt at constructing a regime of labour based on the exploitation of the labour of the convicted. To their number should be added those few cases in which these convicts had their families with them, though most left Copenhagen alone.⁴⁷ Most of them were men chosen among the inmates of Trunken, the dockyard prison in Copenhagen. From what we can tell from the sources, they were almost exclusively drawn from those carrying life sentences. Most convicts appear to have been either thieves or poachers. Most would have been branded or otherwise disfigured, having received physical punishments before being sent to Copenhagen. Prior to embarkation, they had performed intense physical labour in the service of the navy. There, they wore chains and were nicknamed 'iron prisoners'. The work was very demanding, their rations meagre and death rates staggering, with epidemics continually taking heavy tolls.⁴⁸ Their physical deterioration also helps explain the extraordinary death rates during transportation.

This practice of displacement and exploitation was brutally coercive, but to seventeenth-century elites it made perfect sense. In fact, and perhaps surprisingly, there was no inherent problem or scandal in this group of criminals substituting for enslaved Africans. This was due to the stigma of dishonour suffered by the groups of convicts singled out for transportation. Honour and its obverse played a major part in how early modern Scandinavians understood punishment. All convicts whose corporal punishments had in this way involved an executioner or the public display afforded by the pillory were counted as 'dishonoured'.⁴⁹ This was a serious matter; these forms of punishments were seen as defiling, marking the punished as living somewhat outside civic society for the rest of his or her life. Honour was intricately linked to 'honesty' and so the dishonoured were also seen as dishonest, unable to speak the truth and to bear witness.⁵⁰ A dishonoured man could no longer enter into military or naval service. Nor could the dishonoured become citizens. Perhaps most importantly, dishonoured convicts were also considered unpardonable.⁵¹ Thus, it came with very real consequences.

In a way dishonour signalled the perpetual loss of ones belonging to the community. In this way, it can be likened to the social death that scholars have seen as marking the life of the enslaved. In his classic *Slavery and Social Death*, Orlando Patterson argues that what distinguishes the enslaved from other forced labourers was the fact that

the enslaved were effectively seen as non-subjects – as having no social life outside the relations of domination that they were subjected to. Slavery was ‘a substitute for death, usually violent death’. Such an existence of non-subjectivity and ‘conditional commutation’ was exactly what characterized the dishonoured convicts carrying life sentences.⁵² Certainly, the extraction of convict labour and subsequent transportation of convicts were driven by many of the same economic and political forces that created and sustained Atlantic slavery; as subaltern labourers, they were more or less interchangeable. However, the analogy goes further. In his attempt at defining what makes a ‘slave’, Patterson has argued that being outside the game of honour and reputation was a key constituting feature in slavery itself.⁵³ This further highlights the likeness of these two categories of labourers.

Contemporaries certainly saw this likeness as well. By the eighteenth century ‘slavery’ became a punishment as such in Denmark–Norway that persisted until the 1850s – although this was a form of slavery in which convicts as such (only their labour) could be commodified.⁵⁴ In his summation of natural law, eighteenth-century scholar Ludvig Holberg drew a telling analogy to Atlantic slavery in a remark on the dishonoured: ‘in the same way slaves are thought not to be proper members of a city’.⁵⁵ To lose honour was to cease having part in the political body. Curiously, the earliest instance of the term ‘slave’ used about convicts in Denmark–Norway that I have seen is from 1682 and regards a group of convicts shipped on a company ship from Bergen in Norway (where several ships stopped along the way, suffering desertions and then taking on more convicts to fill the ranks) to St Thomas fashioned by the company bookkeeper. Thus, the term was employed first by people who knew full well the difference, had it mattered to them.⁵⁶ The term was used, although rarely, by authorities in the colony as well.⁵⁷ On at least one occasion, those authorities sentenced runaway convicts in the colony to sale.⁵⁸ While the systems of criminal justice on the island itself were from the beginning differentiated according to race, the category of dishonour even blurred such lines as it cut across races. This was not only the case with transported convicts. When white military personnel in the Danish West Indies committed offences, they were also at times convicted of hard labour in chains, which was also referred to as ‘slavery’ and at least one commentator explicitly likened this to the conditions of ‘another dishonoured slave or negro’.⁵⁹ Such penal labour was akin to the hard labour punishment of ‘fortress slavery’ common for male felons on Danish and Norwegian soil.

Elites saw dishonoured subjects as ideal colonial labourers. This marks a contrast to Sweden: while similar notions of dishonour prevailed in Sweden, the Swedes seem to have consciously avoided transporting the groups tainted by dishonour, such as common thieves – the group that made up the majority of the Danish convicts. This was a key difference that goes a long way towards explaining why convicts in Sweden were identified more with the indentured, while in the Danish case they were a fully separate class.

Perhaps most importantly, the analogous status of convict and enslaved revealed itself in how their labour was in the eyes of company authorities interchangeable. In the sources, we find various hints of the work that convicts were put to, and continually we find enslaved Africans working alongside them. In the earliest years of the colony,

the male convicts performed an array of tasks: clearing land, hauling building materials in the construction of the fort, producing limestone, herding cattle, fishing, harvesting salt, etc. The smaller group of convict women performed domestic labour. We also find hints of how solidarities could form between these groups of subaltern workers. In a long letter from 1681, the colony's first governor lamented how convicts would resist whenever they were to be beaten, 'which manner a party of them had learned from the negros, throwing themselves on the ground when they were to be punished'.⁶⁰ There is, however, one crucial difference between convicts and enslaved Africans which show that despite their interchangeability they remained distinct social groups: convicts appear only on a few occasions to have performed actual plantation labour, and then only as a form of added punishment. One instance involved a case of failed desertion. After an attempt at escape, a group of two convicts and two soldiers were sentenced to perform labour chained together in pairs of two on the company plantation. Led by a cattle thief by the name of Jens Pedersen, they later managed to run away in a canoe but were caught. The other convict, Peder Vognmand, was then made to execute Pedersen.⁶¹ Why plantation labour was otherwise not seen as befitting of convicts is unclear. One possibility is that the company simply did not have a demand for plantation labour in this initial phase. Another possibility explaining this key difference would be the widespread notions that Africans were simply better at plantation work.

Despite solving a labour problem, convicts were seen as problematic. Their superiors lamented their idleness and insubordination.⁶² In the colony, the convicts were effectively the property of the governors who held great power over them. As in New Sweden, it was decided by the company to let the governor single-handedly decide when and if to release them – although as almost all of the Danish convicts carried life-sentences this was more in line with their actual legal status as lives lost. Besides, the formally dishonoured among them were seen as unsuitable for freedom. The first governor, Jørgen Iversen, used great amounts of violence in order to force his labourers to become productive. He justified such violence by describing how, 'I have had there a party of handed-over bodies to toil with who took heed of neither good words or threats, and therefore I myself had to beat them ... if I wanted them to do what I with good words asked of them'. None in the company office in Copenhagen appear to have questioned his conduct when he was later accused by his adversaries in the colony of beating several convicts to death – a charge he partly admitted although he explained the brutality as an attempt at animating their lethargic bodies.⁶³ This brutal indifference speaks multitudes to how the convicts were perceived. However, while the power of officials over the convicts was excessive, it was not monolithic, as it appears in part as a response to acts of resistance on the part of the convicts themselves. Several desertion plots involving convicts (and sometimes indentured servants) can be traced in the sources. As early as June 1672, two convicts and two indentured servants ran away in a company vessel.⁶⁴ Theft was another ill that followed with them.⁶⁵ Even the act of transportation itself proved difficult as the convicts would attempt to run away whenever they were close to harbour. In an instruction for a ship's captain, the directors portrayed them as a 'multitude of indomitable people' and argued that it took special measures of authority for them 'to be forced to obedience'.⁶⁶ Thus, convicts rendered the empire dissonant and anxious.

At one point, they did even more than that. In early November 1682, a frigate, the *Havmanden* ('the Merman'), with upwards of 100 convicts on-board set sails towards St Thomas. At the time of the voyage, the company was struggling and it had taken all its efforts and money to get the voyage together. The directors hoped that this voyage and the company labour it brought to the colony would help them regain full control of the island which they perceived to have become dangerously heterogeneous because of an increasing influx of Dutch from elsewhere in the Caribbean. However, on-board conditions quickly deteriorated and by January 1683, the convicts had formed an alliance with a few of the sailors. On 20 January, they mutinied, killed the captain and the governor who was to go to St Thomas. A convict from Trunken was elected as the new captain, assisted by a mixed band of convicts and sailors. His name was Jokum Gulliksen, and he was a former naval quartermaster who had actually been in the service of the company before, having seen the Danish Gold Coast stations first-hand in a failed slaving voyage in 1680–1681 in the very same ship. In that previous voyage, he watched most of his fellow mariners die from tropical diseases. Because of the shortage of hands, he advanced to the position of master, but after his homecoming he was sentenced for negligence and theft from the ship. After the mutiny, his right-hand man was the ship's sailmaker Peder Frandsen who had also been part of the disastrous African voyage. Gulliksen and his fellow mutineers attempted to bring the ship to Ireland in order to sell the ship and share the spoils, but their alliance ruptured and a large part of the convicts were put ashore in Flores in the Azores, before Gulliksen, Frandsen and a small band of convicts and sailors tried bringing the ship back to Copenhagen, apparently hoping to be pardoned because they had salvaged the ship. However, by late March the ship was wrecked on the Swedish coast. Nine of the mutineers were hanged outside Copenhagen's northern gates, Gulliksen and Frandsen among them.⁶⁷ (See Figure 4.1.)

The wreck accelerated the company's deterioration. While it managed to send a series of smaller vessels to St Thomas in the 1680s (most of which carried smaller contingents of convicts), the company was eventually forced into hibernation, and the trading rights transferred to private entrepreneurs. A part of the island was also leased to a trading company from Brandenburg. Eventually, by the late 1690s, the company was re-organized and re-emerged. They then received a new charter – without the clause granting access to convict labour. This was possible as, in the meantime, the island had been furnished with enough enslaved Africans through other channels to make it a veritable slave trading *entrepôt*.⁶⁸

From this point on, company leaders refused to take on convicts, even as successive Danish kings showed interests in using the Caribbean colonies to alleviate the rising pressure on their penal institutions. Such interests were also inspired by British practices. By 1737, this interest materialized in a request in which the king enquired if the colonies could again be used for the disposal of convicts, on a larger scale than the occasional banishment.⁶⁹ However, the company directors refused the request. They argued that they had taken the 'horrible examples of the past' into consideration and found that convicts would be of utmost danger to the colony. Not only was it 'to be feared that during the voyage they might rebel or do other evil misdeeds as had happened earlier', it was also likely that, 'instead of being of service to the colonists, [the convicts]

Figure 4.1 Illustration accompanying a leaflet from 1683 detailing the mutiny of the convicts and sailors on the *Havmanden* and the execution of the mutineers. Jan von Gent, *Dette er en Grundelig Beretning* (Copenhagen: 1683)

Source: The Royal Library, Copenhagen.

might cause great harm, not only with their scandalous living, but also with seduction to desertion, insubordination as well as causing other disasters.⁷⁰ The king seems to have listened, but in 1746, his successor tried again. This time, the directors produced a series of arguments against using felons as colonial workers. While the British had been able to transport convicts to North America, the Danish case was argued to be different as the British colonies were both stronger and climatically different from the Danish. The tropical heat in the Caribbean would underline fundamental differences between ‘African slaves and Europeans’. ‘White slaves’, they argued, were simply unable to work in the tropical heat. Nor could they provide their own sustenance through gardening. Yet, the real threat was that they were not different enough: the colonies’ racialized social order and its differences would collapse as the mixing of these unfree labourers would deteriorate ‘the discipline among the slaves’. Tuning their readers into intense, but normally unstated, anxieties about the construction of racial hierarchies, the directors argued that ‘these negroes are in many ways superior to the Christians’. The enslaved would realize their superiority and their fears evaporate ‘when they see that whites or Christians also become slaves and are treated in the same way and with the same humiliations as negroes’. Further, the convicts would be determined to regain

their lost freedom 'and when they become mixed or come into contact with the blacks, who themselves are also inclined to rebellion, they will strive towards it, together with them resorting to the most desperate of measures and begin miserable revolts in those countries.'⁷¹ The letter then went on to recount the mutiny in 1683. Not only did such events prove the damage that convicts would bring, their recollection were also in the way of the act of transportation itself, as the mutiny was still in 'fresh memory' making it impossible to get crews for such a voyage.⁷²

However, beginning in 1738, the company had agreed to take on youths from the prison workhouse in Copenhagen on the premise that they had not arrived there for any 'dishonest reason'. They were to serve, not as convicts, but as indentured servants. Here we find a model that fits a northern European mould better than the experiments of the late seventeenth century. This practice was then repeated several times in the 1740s although it is unclear how many the company took on.⁷³ A conservative estimate would number these convicts at around 100 persons. This also raises the question as to whether more convicts hide among those figuring as indentured in the Danish sources in other periods.

Interestingly, much of what we know of convicts in the Danish Empire comes from documents found in the same archival box in which these anxious letters appear. There is a reason for this: much of this material was gathered as part of the company's documentation of the dangers of convict transportation. For instance, a long and detailed journal that describes the mutiny of 1683 only exists in a copy which dates from this period and which appears to have been copied in preparation of the abovementioned letters. Thus, much of our knowledge about the convicts in the Danish Empire is possible because of the meeting of opposed interests: the wish of kings and their officials of using the colonies as penal colonies conflicting with the nervous social imaginary of the West India and Guinea Company directors. The fears that become visible in these nervous writings are the conditions that allow us to understand the agency of the convicts which the documents were copied and kept to illustrate. No such conflicting interests or eruptions of anxiety shaped the history of convicts in the Swedish case, which is much more difficult to know, in part because of this difference.

Comparisons

Both the Danish and the Swedish use of convicts in their seventeenth-century colonial empires rest firmly within a European tradition of solving problems of recruitment by coercing criminals into colonial servitude. Yet there are important differences within this European trend and even between these two neighbouring empires. Beginning with the convicts themselves, we might say that the Danish convict experience was decidedly more brutal than the Swedish. This had roots in several factors: firstly, the tropical conditions in the Caribbean as opposed to the temperate climate of North America created a considerable difference in putting the convicts at risk. While the Swedes did experience famine following bad harvests, destitution and sickness took a much heavier toll among their Danish counterparts; Secondly, the Danish convicts

carried life sentences as opposed to the Swedish who all had a set end date on their unfreedom, which appears modelled on indenture. In practice, a few of those convicts who survived for more than a handful of years at St Thomas did, however, gain some degree of freedom, but we find none of the upward social mobility of the Swedish. This is also linked to the fact that most of the Danish convicts were perpetually stigmatized due to their dishonour while the Swedish convicts had been chosen among groups who were not seen as perpetually alien to society (mainly military transgressors, petty criminals and Finns). Thirdly, the Swedish convicts did not work side by side with enslaved African whereas the Danes became part of what was from the start designed to be a plantation economy based on coercive exploitation and enslavement. A fourth difference pertained to many, but not all, convicts in the two small empires: many of the Danish convicts experienced a sort of serial displacement (many of them having been transported from somewhere else in the realm to Copenhagen and many also having been in prison for several years before being selected for transportation), while almost all of the Swedish appear to have been transported after their initial sentence and with most being from the counties surrounding Gothenburg. All of these factors help explain why several convict colonists in New Sweden could rise to prominent positions and become respected members of the small colonial community while convicts at St Thomas led brief lives of violence and struggle. In short, we might say that these differences resulted in convicts in New Sweden approximating the status of the indentured, while the convicts on St Thomas approximated that of the enslaved.

The organization of convict transportation also differed markedly between the two empires. The Swedish system was more akin to an ad hoc series of banishments while the Danish system was firmly institutionalized and linked to specific sites of incarceration. This also meant that transportation was closer to being a form of punishment in itself in Sweden (and in some cases the convicts were faced with the choice of some other form of punishment instead), while it was grafted to an already existing system of internal exile and penal labour in the service of the Danish–Norwegian state, in a way as a form of added penalty. Lastly, we might say that the Swedish system differed from the Danish in that it was also designed to rid Sweden of groups that were seen as social threats – deserters, men who avoided conscriptions and, most importantly, the forest Finns. No such ambition marked the Danish system, where the only problem solved by it was that of scarcity of labour in the Caribbean, but where the highly centralized penal system allowed for transportation to become firmly baked into the model of empire.

Yet, there were also many similarities. Firstly, convicts' legal status was blurred and somewhat improvised in both instances, which left much power over their lives in the hands of governors. While I have tried to show that they enjoyed different social status in the colony, they shared the experience of being at the mercy of their superiors in a situation where their legal status was ill-defined. Secondly, convicts' social status in both cases was thought of (but, as argued, probably mainly experienced by the Danish convicts themselves) as akin to a form of slavery, the difference being that in the Swedish case this term was applied to all unfree groups, while in the Danish it did not apply to the indentured. Thirdly, both systems saw the convicts becoming colonial labourers at times when the recruitment efforts of the trading companies

(both heavily subsidized by the state) into whose hands they were placed suffered from popular beliefs and storytelling about the hardships of colonial life. Thus, while both systems were small (though significant within the context of the miniature scale of these colonial empires themselves), they reveal just how structurally important the use of convicts was when faced with difficulties and contingencies in recruitment in the building of overseas empires. Finally, convicts in both colonies were used in ways that mirrored the use of convicts as workers in military construction practices at home.

It remains clear that convict transportation was prompted by the question of labour. Had labour been ample, convict transportation would most likely have been confined to the sort of banishments I noted about the Danish colony in India. However, faced with labour shortages seventeenth-century mercantilist logic turned to the penal system. This causality makes the variations all the more interesting; when two empires so alike and intertwined crafted such different systems we should ponder how this variation reveals a whole lot about the muddled process of empire-building and all the contingencies and variables involved. There were many different, mutating models of empire.

Epilogue: Later flows

If it was not for the West India and Guinea Company authorities' anxieties (prompted by convict agency), the history of the Danish Empire might have turned out very different. Throughout the period in which the company faced and rejected requests to take on convicts, successive kings and their officials discussed and explored every avenue for the use of convict labour in colonial settings. This resulted in several experiments: for instance, twenty-four convicts, twelve men and twelve women, were sent to Greenland (and forcibly coupled) in the late 1720s in a failed colonization attempt under Governor Claus Paars. Plans floated about using convicts on a greater scale in Greenland, but never materialized.⁷⁴ A similarly short-lived experiment in the 1750s and 1760s saw several small contingents of convicts shipped from Copenhagen to the Finnmark in northern Scandinavia – at the time a sort of colonial frontier populated by the indigenous Sámi people.⁷⁵ Danish and Norwegian authorities struggled in their attempts at populating it with migrants at a time when the climate made it inhospitable. This might explain why the Finnmark was used as a site for banishment from other parts of Norway – a practice at least dating back to the late seventeenth century when the Norwegian Law Code of 1685 made such exile a sanctioned form of punishment for Norwegian courts. It continued being used in this regard even after Norway gained independence from Denmark in 1814. The convicts appear to have laboured in the local fishing industry. However, the idea of using this site for convicts sent all the way from Copenhagen which emerged in the 1750s was novel. The trading company which at that point held rights to trade in the Finnmark also protested. Their officials argued that Danish convicts were not used to the harsh arctic climate.⁷⁶ This might explain why the largest contingent of convicts shipped to the Finnmark were a contingent of

Icelandic convicts sent there in 1763 – convicts who had already been transported from Iceland to Copenhagen.⁷⁷ Why this experiment was also abandoned is unclear. However, it testifies to the Danish–Norwegian state's intense interest in using this form of punishment. Had the West India and Guinea Company not protested, new flows of white 'slaves' across the Atlantic would surely have been established.

While these schemes were abandoned, Atlantic crossings have persisted into the modern period. In the mid-nineteenth century, it became relatively common to grant convicts release on the condition that they emigrate to North America. The number of inmates turned semi-coerced emigrants is unknown, but scholars have documented how at least 1,100 people did so with the help of Copenhagen's police alone.⁷⁸ This practice persisted into the first decades of the twentieth century. An even more enduring flow has been running in the opposite direction. I noted how the Copenhagen prisons from whence the convicts came served as the prisons of the entire Danish–Norwegian state. This centripetal circulation, which saw convicts transported towards the centre of the empire, continued unabated, finding expression in new ways, some of which persist to this day. For instance, in the second half of the nineteenth century, as slavery in the West Indies was abolished, the enslaved became Danish subjects proper, meaning that they also became part of the Danish penal system. Even before then, convicts had occasionally been shipped from the West Indies to serve sentences in Copenhagen prisons. Until the Danish West Indies were sold to the USA in 1917, quite a few Caribbean people traversed the Atlantic in order to serve prison time in Danish penal institutions.

So have subjects from Greenland, which although it is now self-governed still remains part of the Danish kingdom. In fact, some Greenlandic convicts still cross the Atlantic, as do convicts from the Faroe Islands. In the prison of Herstedvester, a closed prison near Copenhagen that houses many inmates suffering from various kinds of mental illness, there is a special ward for Greenlandic inmates. Most of them have been sentenced in Greenland but have been transported to Denmark because they are considered too great a risk to house in the institutions of their native country. Some of them do not speak Danish, and they are severed from family and friends.⁷⁹ As of this writing in late 2016, long overdue plans are in the works to establish a new institution in Nuuk to house these inmates on their native soil beginning in 2018, though it remains unclear if its capacity will prove sufficient. In this way, the transportation of the convicted remains a very real marker of Denmark's colonial history and its persistence.

Strangely, as one chapter in this story of forced mobility appears about to close, another opens. This one is not indicative of colonial pasts but perhaps of Scandinavia's partaking in global futures of punishment; Norway recently engaged in a new experiment in convict transportation. Because its prisons have become increasingly overcrowded, Norwegian authorities have made a bilateral agreement with the government of the Netherlands to send convicts to a facility called Norgerhaven in Noordenveld in the north-eastern part of the country. The facility is a special ward that is part of larger prison facility for Dutch inmates. The Norwegian ward opened in September 2015 seeing the transportation of more than 200 convicts across the aerospace of the North Sea.⁸⁰

Notes

- 1 Christian G. De Vito and Alex Lichtenstein, 'Writing a Global History of Convict Labour', *International Review of Social History* 58, (2013): 285–325.
- 2 Frederik Ekengren, Magdalena Naum and Ulla Isabel Zagal-Mach Wolfe, 'Sweden in the Delaware Valley: Everyday Life and Material Culture in New Sweden', in *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity*, eds. Magdalena Naum and Jonas M. Nordin (New York, NY: Springer, 2013), 169–187; Amandus Johnson, *The Swedish Settlements on the Delaware*, 2 vols (Philadelphia, PA: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1911), 1:129–132.
- 3 Magdalena Naum, 'The Malady of Emigrants: Homesickness and Longing in the Colony of New Sweden (1638–1655)', in *Archaeologies of Mobility and Movement*, eds. M. C. Beaudry and T. G. Parno (New York, NY: Springer 2013), 165–177. Such dread made army officials consider transportation to New Sweden a fitting punishment for draft dodgers and deserters. See Lars Kaag to Axel Oxenstierna, 1 July 1648, printed in *Rikskansleren Axel Oxenstiernas skrifter och brevväxling*, 2 series, vol. 9 (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & Söners Förlag, 1898), 684.
- 4 A host of other initiatives meant to create New Sweden in the mould of Sweden proper is discussed in Ekengren, Naum and Wolfe, 'Sweden', 174.
- 5 The Privy Council to Olof Stake, 8 August 1639, printed in *Handlingar Rörande Skandnaviens Historie*, vol. 29 (Stockholm: Kungliga Samfundet för utgivande av handskrifter rörande Skandnaviens historie, 1848), 210–212. For more on worries about getting Swedish subjects to replace the foreigners, see also: Johnson, *Swedish*, 1:125.
- 6 The organizational history of the Swedish Empire has been explored by Stellan Dahlgren in his 'New Sweden: The State, the Company and Johan Risingh', in *The Rise and Fall of New Sweden: Governor Johan Risingh's Journal 1654–1655 in its Historical Context*, eds. Stellan Dahlgren and Hans Norman (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1988), 1–44.
- 7 The Privy Council to Olof Stake, 8 August 1639, printed in *Handlingar Rörande Skandnaviens*, 210–212.
- 8 *Handlingar Rörande Sveriges Historia: Svenska Riksrådets Protokoll*, vol. 8 (Stockholm: Kungl. Boktryckeriet, 1898), 640.
- 9 Naum, 'Malady', 169; Margareta Revera, 'The Making of a Civilized Nation: Nation Building, Aristocratic Culture, and Social Change', in *New Sweden in America*, eds. Carol E. Hoffeecker et al. (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1995), 25–53; see the list of passengers on the ship *Kalmar Nyckel* in 1641 printed in Johnson, *Swedish*, 1:151–153. It lists both a deserter and a convicted soldier among the migrants. Interestingly, it also lists a servant of Clas Fleming, a member of the Privy Council, who was to go to New Sweden as punishment for some unspecified crime.
- 10 Royal Letter to County Governor Carl Siggesson, 13 April 1641, printed in *Handlingar Rörande Skandnaviens*, 1848), 217–218; Johnson, *Swedish*, 1:151; Sten Carlsson, 'The New Sweden Colonists, 1628–1656: Their Geographical and Social Background', in Hoffeecker et al., *New Sweden*, 171–187 (esp. 174).
- 11 Carlsson, 'New Sweden', 175.
- 12 Johnson, *Swedish*, 1:238–43; *Handlingar Rörande Sveriges Historia: Svenska Riksrådets Protokoll*, vol. 10 (Stockholm: Kungl. Boktryckeriet, 1905), 354.
- 13 Karen Ordahl Kupperman, 'Scandinavian Colonists Confront the New World', in Hoffeecker et al., *New Sweden*, 89–111.

- 14 For an introduction to British practices, see Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, 'Convict Labour Extraction and Transportation from Britain and Ireland, 1615–1870', in *Global Convict Labour*, eds. Christian Giuseppe De Vito and Alex Lichtenstein (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 168–196. See also Maxwell-Stewart in this volume.
- 15 In the earliest efforts to recruit in 1639, it appears that the convicts were allowed to return to Sweden after only a couple of years. This appears to have been abandoned for later voyages.
- 16 Revera, 'Making', 25–53.
- 17 Carlsson, 'New Sweden', 181.
- 18 For an example, see Sigfrid Wieselgren, *Fängselsor och Fångvård: Från äldre tider till våra dagar* (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & Söner, 1895), 146.
- 19 Per Lindeström, *Per Lindeströms Resa till Nya Sverige 1653–1656* (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1923), 131–132.
- 20 Johan Printz's report, 1647, printed in Amandus Johnson, *The Instruction for Johan Printz* (Philadelphia, PA: The Swedish Colonial Society, 1930), 129–130. This caused 'all of them except the freemen' to wish to leave New Sweden (*ibid.*). In a report from 1644, Printz specified who had died: '25 have died during this year at different places, as the daily register shows, 12 labourers, 8 soldiers, 2 freemen, 2 women [and the preacher]'. Johan Printz's report, 1644, printed in *ibid.*, 109.
- 21 Carlson, 'New Sweden', 175.
- 22 Naum, 'Malady', 170.
- 23 Thomas Campanius Holm, *Description of the Province of New Sweden* (Philadelphia, PA: McCarthy & Davis, 1834; orig. 1702), 73. Holm also relates what he admits is second-hand knowledge:

In the beginning of Governor Printz's administration, there came a great number of those criminals, who were sent over from Sweden. When the European inhabitants [of the colony] perceive it, they would not suffer them to set their foot on shore, but they were all obliged to return, so that a great many of them perished in the voyages. This was related to me [a seventeenth century traveller], amongst other things, by an old trust-worthy man, names Nils Matsson Utter, who, after his return home, served in his Majesty's life-guards.

Ibid.

While the actual veracity of this story is disputed by the fact that Printz in 1647 had convicts as labourers, this story suggests that stories about convicts circulated and influenced how people understood New Sweden.

- 24 Johnson, *Swedish*, 152–153.
- 25 Johan Thorsten Sellin, *Slavery and the Penal System* (New York, NY: Elsevier, 1976), 60–61.
- 26 Holm, *Description*, 73.
- 27 Johan Printz, 'Report of Gov. Printz for 1647, and the Reply to it', *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 7, no. 3 (1883): 271–285 (quote from 283).
- 28 Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 173.
- 29 Such rolls are found as an appendix to Johnson, *Swedish*, 699–726.
- 30 Carlsson, 'New Sweden', 171–187 (esp. 174).
- 31 Johnson, *Swedish*, 1:148–149.
- 32 Royal Letter to County Governor Gustav Lejonhuvud, 30 July 1640, printed in: *Handlingar Rörande Skandnaviens Historie*, 29:213–216.

- 33 Royal Letter to County Governor Olof Stake, 16 April 1641, printed in: *Handlingar Rörande Skandinavien Historie*, 29:218–220. Some Finns convicted of burning forests and sentenced to labour in the service of the military actually petitioned to be sent to New Sweden with their families instead. See Johnson, *Swedish*, 1:149; *Handlingar Rörande Sveriges Historia*, 8:165.
- 34 See Juha Pentikäinen, 'The Forest Finns and Transmitters of Finnish Culture from Savo via Central Scandinavia to Delaware', in Hoffecker et al., *New Sweden*, 291–301.
- 35 Lindeström, *Per*, 50–51.
- 36 Sweden did not expand overseas until the 1780s when they gained possession of St Barts in the Caribbean.
- 37 Gunnar Olsen, *Vore Gamle Tropekolonier: Ostindien 1616–1732* (Copenhagen: Forlaget Fremad, 1967), 45 and 189–192.
- 38 For more see Olaf Olsen, *Christian 4.s tugt- og børnehus*, 2nd edn (Copenhagen: Worminatum, 1978); Peter Agerbo Jensen, 'Christian IV's tugt- og børnehus: Social institution eller merkantilistisk foretagende?', *Kulturstudier*, no. 2 (2012): 6–27.
- 39 In 1620, the king announced that convicts sentenced to the galleys were instead to be sent to Copenhagen to work. Knud Klem, 'Christian 4. og Bremerholm', *Handels- og Søfartsmuseets Årbøger* (1977): 76–108. For more on Trunken see Frederik Stuckenberg, *Fængselsvæsenet i Danmark 1550–1741* (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gad, 1893).
- 40 This makes Trunken among the first criminal prisons in the world. Pieter Spierenburg has argued that the Amsterdam Rasphouse was the first prison in the world to house only criminals (as opposed to beggars, vagrants, orphans, etc.). The turning point for Amsterdam was 1654, when an institution for non-convicted inmates was erected. Trunken was, however, older than this. Pieter Spierenburg, *The Prison Experience: Disciplinary Institutions and Their Inmates in Early Modern Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007; orig. 1991), 143–150.
- 41 Domme over fangerne på Bremerholmen, boxes. 1–16, Holmens chef (søetaten), Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.
- 42 The charter is printed in Ole Feldbæk, *Danske Handelskompagnier 1616–1843: Oktrojer og interne Ledelsesregler* (Copenhagen: Selskabet for Udgivelse af Kilder til Dansk Historie, 1986), 365–380.
- 43 See Fortegnelse huad det folck som döde paa henreysen til St Thomas hafuer kost Compagniet, Box 138, (1671–)1679–1709, 1749–1750 Calculations of affairs, etc. West India and Guinea Company, Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.
- 44 Copybook of letters, p. 328, Box 41, 16 December 1671–7 November 1676 Letter copybook, West India and Guinea Company, Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen. Stories about unfreedom in northern Africa circulated widely in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Denmark. For more see Martin Rheinheimer, 'From Amrum to Algiers and Back: The Reintegration of a Renegade in the Eighteenth Century', *Central European History* 36, no. 2 (2003): 209–233.
- 45 Copybook of letters, p. 212, Box 42, 18 November 1676–25 July 1682 Letter copybook, West India and Guinea Company, Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.
- 46 Copybook, fol. 18, Box 34, 11 April 1682–10 January 1688 Copybook of petitions, West India and Guinea Company, Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.
- 47 The reason for this might be that they had committed crimes that were serious enough to merit divorce. However, it is impossible to prove this hypothesis as practice at the time appears not to have fully conformed with the laws on the matter.

- 48 These figures as well as the examples mentioned are based on the entry books of the Admiralty found at the National Archives in Copenhagen. See Domme over fangerne på Bremerholmen, boxes 1–16, Holmens chef (søetaten), Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.
- 49 The belief that coming into contact with the pillory was dishonouring was so strong that it made repairs to it difficult. Such task had to be shared out among all the artisans in a given city. Hugo Matthiessen, *De Kagstrøgne: Et blad af prostitutionens historie i Danmark* (Copenhagen: Samlerens Forlag, 1986; orig. 1919), 61.
- 50 Erling Sandmo has explored this tight link between honour and truth in his *Voldssamfunnets undergang: Om disciplineringen av Norge på 1600-tallet* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2002), 136–143. He has found that losing one's honour for crimes such as theft or adultery also meant that the criminal was seen as a liar.
- 51 Tyge Krogh, *Oplysningstiden og det magiske* (Copenhagen: Samleren, 2000), 342–348 and 592. Authorities feared that housing such dishonoured elements would defile the honour of the military institutions themselves.
- 52 Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 5–6.
- 53 Patterson, *Slavery*, 44–45.
- 54 This was not merely seen as a rhetorical similarity. For instance, describing the VOC's enslaved African workers at the Cape colony, an East India traveller in 1732 remarked how: 'the company has there a house for slaves, in which they keep 200 black slaves, who do the tasks that might be needed, both men and women. They are treated like the convicts of Bremerholmen in Denmark, except they are not in irons and can walk about town as they please when they are done working.' J. H. Huusman, *En kort Beskrivelse over Skibets Cron-Printz Christians lykkelige gjorde Reyse baade til og fra China* (Copenhagen: H. K. M. private bogtrykkeri, 1760), E2.
- 55 Ludvig Holberg, *Introduction Til Naturens- Og Folke-Rettens Kundskab, Uddragen Af de fornemste Juristers besynderlig Grotii Pufendorfs og Thomasii Skrifter* (Copenhagen: Johan Kruse, 1716), 2:110.
- 56 See Fortegnelse huad det folck som döde paa henreysen til St Thomas hafuer kost Compagniet, Box 138, (1671–)1679–1709, 1749–1750 Calculations of affairs, etc., West India and Guinea Company, Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.
- 57 Johan Lorents to the company Directors, 19 December 1689, Box 510, 1687–1692 Copybooks, kept at St Thomas, West India and Guinea Company, Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.
- 58 Johan Heinsen, *Mutiny in the Danish Atlantic World: Convicts, Sailors and a Dissonant Empire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).
- 59 See for instance, J. L. Carstens, 'Beskrivelse om Alle de Danske, Americanske eller West-Jndiske Ey-Lande', *Danske Magazin* 8, no. 3 (1970): 237. Of course there was one key difference between these categories, both of which contemporary Danes conceptualized as slaves: the children of convicts were born free.
- 60 Iversen to the company directors, 12 October 1681, Box 78, 1672–1681 Incoming and outgoing letters and documents 1681, West India and Guinea Company, Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.
- 61 Johan Heinsen, 'Flygtige stemmer: Straffefanger i Dansk Vestindien', *TEMP* 13, (2016): 4–26.
- 62 See for instance, Iversen to the company directors, 15 September and 12 October 1681, Box 78, 1672–1681 Incoming and outgoing letters and documents 1681, West India and Guinea Company, Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.

- 63 Iversen to the company directors, 12 October 1681, Box 78, 1672–1681 Incoming and outgoing letters and documents 1681, West India and Guinea Company, Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen. I have discussed Iversen's letters and its construction of the convict labourer at length in Johan Heinsen, 'Dissonance in the Danish Atlantic: Speech, Violence and Mutiny, 1672–1683', *Atlantic Studies* 13, no. 2 (2016): 187–205.
- 64 Iversen to the company directors, 12 October 1681, Box 78, 1672–1681 Incoming and outgoing letters and documents 1681, West India and Guinea Company, Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen. See also Minutes, p. 5, Box 484, 6 March 1672–2 October 1684 General register (The Governor's Council), West India and Guinea Company, Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.
- 65 Heinsen, *Mutiny*.
- 66 Ordre oc Instrux for Capitain Jan Bloem, 31 October 1682, Box 27, 1671–1690 Instructions, commissions, contracts and sworn statements, West India and Guinea Company, Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.
- 67 Heinsen, *Mutiny*.
- 68 Jens Olav Bro-Jørgensen, *Vore Gamle Tropekolonier: Dansk indtil 1755* (Copenhagen: Fremad, 1966).
- 69 J. L. v Holstein to the company directors, 14 August 1737, Box 181, 1671–1753 Correspondence concerning the expatriation of delinquents, prisoners and paupers to the West Indies, West India and Guinea Company, Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.
- 70 The company directors to J. L. v Holstein, 21 September 1737, Box 181, 1671–1753 Correspondence concerning the expatriation of delinquents, prisoners and paupers to the West Indies, West India and Guinea Company, Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.
- 71 They explicitly referenced the rebellion of enslaved Africans on St Jan in 1733. For more on the rebellion see Louise Sebro, 'The 1733 Slave Revolt on the Island of St John: Continuity and Change from Africa to the America', in Naum and Nordin, eds., *Scandinavian*, 261–274.
- 72 The company directors to J. L. v Holstein, 28 November 1747, Box 181, 1671–1753 Correspondence concerning the expatriation of delinquents, prisoners and paupers to the West Indies, West India and Guinea Company, Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.
- 73 The poor-relief directors to the company directors, 12 February 1738, Box 181, 1671–1753 Correspondence concerning the expatriation of delinquents, prisoners and paupers to the West Indies, West India and Guinea Company, Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.
- 74 See Hans Egede, *Omstændelig og udførlig Relation Angaaende Den Grønlandske Missions Begyndelse og Fortsættelse* (Copenhagen: Joh. Christ. Broth., 1738), 241; Finn Gad, *Grønlands Historie II: 1700–1782* (Copenhagen: Nyt Nordisk Forlag, 1969), 158.
- 75 Kirsti Strømbull, *Kystfisket i Finnmark – en rettshistorie* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2011), 13–17.
- 76 The directors of the Icelandic Company to J. L. v. Holstein, 4 December 1751, Kopibog 1750 C–1753, Det kgl. oktrojerede Islandske Kompagni, Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.
- 77 Slaverulle, 1741–1770, Box 32, Københavns Stokhus, Landsarkivet for Sjælland, Copenhagen.
- 78 Christian Larsen, 'Hvor mange forbrydere har Amerika ikke befriet os for? Københavns Politis eksport af kriminelle 1864–1905', *Fortid og Nutid* (2001): 193–206. See also John Bertelsen and Birgit Kirkebæk, *Uønsket i Danmark – bortsendt til Amerika* (Copenhagen: SFAH, 2014).

- 79 Their conditions have been studied from an anthropological perspective in a master's thesis. See Julie Rahbæk Møller and Marlène Elisabeth M. J. Spielmann, *Udsatte indsatte: en antropologisk analyse af grønlandskdømtes erfaringer i fængsler i Danmark og Grønland* (Copenhagen: Institut for Antropologi, 2006). In what appears an attempt at preventing isolation, each convict has the right to have the flight paid for one relative once a year. See <http://www.anstaltenvedherstedvester.dk/KL-1822.aspx> (accessed 5 January 2016).
- 80 See <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/norgerhaven-fengsel-i-nederland-apnet/id2438108/> (accessed 5 January 2016).