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## Perceptions, Promises, And Power: Anna Maria Falconbridge, The Sierra Leone Company, And The Development Of Freetown, 1791-1802

Jackson Wood

*William & Mary - Arts & Sciences*, [jacksonwood66@gmail.com](mailto:jacksonwood66@gmail.com)

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Perceptions, Promises, and Power: Anna Maria Falconbridge, the Sierra Leone  
Company, and the Development of Freetown, 1791-1802

Jackson Elliott Wood  
King, North Carolina

Bachelor of Arts, Davidson College, 2019

A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty  
of The College of William & Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

Lyon G. Tyler Department of History

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## APPROVAL PAGE

This Thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of  
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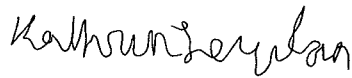
Master of Arts



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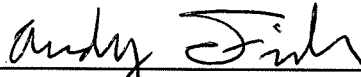
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Committee Chair

Kathrin Levitan, Associate Professor, History  
College of William & Mary



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Andrew Fisher, Associate Professor, History  
College of William & Mary



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Fabrício Prado, Associate Professor, History  
College of William & Mary

## ABSTRACT

### Suppression, Representation, and Bias: The Sierra Leone Company, Anna Maria Falconbridge, and Portrayals of Indigenous Africans, 1791-1802

This paper examines the first decade of Freetown, a British colony in Sierra Leone. Specifically, it analyzes relations between the Sierra Leone Company, the colony's administrative and governing body, and indigenous Africans in areas surrounding the colony. Although the Sierra Leone Company officially expressed a desire to establish friendship with indigenous Africans (especially the Temne), the Company's writings betrayed its intent to control and suppress the Temne. This intent becomes amplified when one compares portrayals of the Temne in the Company's reports to portrayals of the Temne in Anna Maria Falconbridge's travel narrative, *Two Voyages to Sierra Leone* (1794). Falconbridge depicted the Temne in much more respectful ways and even included their perspectives on certain events.

### For Whom and For What? Promises, Perceptions, and the Trajectory of the Settler Colony of Freetown, 1791-1800

This paper analyzes relations between the Sierra Leone Company and Freetown's Nova Scotian settlers. The paper takes as its focal point the journey of two Nova Scotian settlers, Cato Perkins and Isaac Anderson, to London in 1793 to present a petition of grievances to the Sierra Leone Company. Upon careful investigation of this event, this paper argues that the Sierra Leone Company's belief in their financial generosity played a significant role in their decision to reject Perkins and Anderson's petition and that the rebellious sentiments which culminated in the attempted Nova Scotian rebellion of September 1800 began during Perkins and Anderson's journey. Furthermore, this paper claims that Freetown was a settler colony and identifies significant issues surrounding Perkins and Anderson's journey to London that scholars of settler colonialism should consider when studying settler colonies. Three such issues are promises made to settlers, the opinions of observers, and the perceptions that colonial administrators have of settlers.

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## Inspirations, Motivations, and Directions: An Intellectual Biography

The papers that I wrote for my portfolio were largely inspired by the honors thesis that I wrote at Davidson. In that thesis, I analyzed the British colony of Freetown in Sierra Leone, specifically in the context of the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and the colony's transition to being a crown colony in 1808. I wrote about the impact of the forced labor system of apprenticeship on the colony and about what key figures in the colony—including governor Thomas Perronet Thompson and chief justice Robert Thorpe—thought its presence meant for the process of abolition.

I came to William and Mary open to doing something different, but I still wanted to do something that was loosely related to what I had done at Davidson because I had experience in it. For Dr. Fisher's Settler Colonialism seminar, I initially thought about doing a broad study of how the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 impacted labor dynamics in British West Africa. I proposed this idea on the first day of class, but Dr. Fisher said that it aligned with franchise colonialism and not settler colonialism. He also suggested that I do a project on a settler colony in Africa and named Liberia and Sierra Leone as possibilities. Given my history of work on Sierra Leone, this was a most welcome suggestion that I decided to heed.

When I first started to do research for my Settler Colonialism paper, I was not wedded to doing something in the time period with which I was familiar, but that is ultimately what happened. I began the process by combing Swem for any sources they had on Sierra Leone. I found a great collection of treaties between



indigenous chiefs and various British people in Sierra Leone, and I started rereading the Sierra Leone Company's reports that I had first read for my undergraduate thesis. The Sierra Leone Company was a joint-stock company that administered the colony of Freetown from 1792-1808. As I read these reports and continued to research, I realized that the initial period of Freetown when it was under Company administration would be a fruitful period about which to write because I found it interesting while writing my honors thesis but focused mainly on the period during which it was a crown colony. Therefore, I decided to make this earlier period of the colony my main focus.

As I continued my research, the collection of treaties proved to be unhelpful because many of them did not deal with Freetown and were outside the period I had chosen. In a search for more sources, I emailed Dr. Chouin. He responded quickly and pointed me to several great resources, the most significant of which turned out to be Anna Maria Falconbridge's *Two Voyages to Sierra Leone*. I began reading this source and some analysis of it by literary scholar Deirdre Coleman. As I read, I discovered interesting comparisons between Falconbridge's portrayals of indigenous Africans—particularly the Temne—and the Sierra Leone Company's portrayals of indigenous Africans. This became the subject matter of my paper. I also remembered a very interesting document from my undergraduate thesis about the Sierra Leone Company attempting to educate the son of a Temne chief named Naimbana. The document was honestly not relevant to what I wanted to do for my thesis, but, at the expense of flow and coherence, I kept my analysis of it in the thesis.

Fortunately, the document fit very well within the framework of my Settler Colonialism paper, and it was for this reason that I was able to analyze it much more effectively.

My work in Dr. Prado's Atlantic World seminar largely built off of the work that I did in the fall. At certain points in the fall, Dr. Fisher suggested that I write about the dynamics in the colony involving the Nova Scotian settlers, but I decided not to because I thought that analysis of the Temne in relation to Freetown provided enough grounds for coherent analysis. When Dr. Fisher made these suggestions, I would think to myself, "That seems like a good project for the spring." That was the decision I made. I also decided to stick with the same source base—Sierra Leone Company reports (the one from 1794 in this case) and Falconbridge—because each contained substantive discussion of the Nova Scotian settlers. Particularly, I thought that the relationship of these two to one another made them interesting to analyze side-by-side because, as I allude to in my Atlantic World paper, Falconbridge published her narrative as a response to the Company's 1794 report. I also read a good bit of the manuscript journal of the colony's first governor, John Clarkson, but did not find any material that would fit well with the research I did in the two other documents.

My careful reading of these two documents led me to find lots of interesting material, but I was not sure how to tie it all together or to determine the deeper significance of it. Shortly after I submitted my prospectus, I went to see Dr. Prado in his office hours and laid these issues before him. Fortunately, Dr. Prado's answers were so helpful that they laid the foundation for the paper I

decided to write. Dr. Prado told me that I had found evidence of “tensions within the settler colonial project.” This comment gave me the idea to incorporate settler colonial theory into my analysis. It is somewhat humorous that I did not write a paper about the implications of Freetown’s status as a settler colony in my Settler Colonialism seminar, but I suppose things work out that way sometimes. I also mentioned the later 1800 rebellion to Dr. Prado, and he floated the possibility that I could argue that the seeds of this rebellion were sown in 1793. This ended up being one of the significant claims/interventions I made in my paper. In short, then, I owe an immense amount of gratitude to Dr. Prado. My paper would not be what it is without that visit to his office.

Over the course of this semester, I have decided that I do not want to continue in graduate school. Therefore, I do not intend to publish these papers. That said, I will acknowledge some ways that they could be improved which would likely put them down the path to publication. For Dr. Prado’s paper, I would integrate more analysis of the events between 1793 and 1800—particularly those involving Isaac Anderson—to strengthen (or perhaps challenge and revise) my claim that the seeds of the 1800 rebellion were sown in London in 1793. I would also engage with more work on settler colonialism, particularly settler colonialism in Africa. I believe that this would add support to my decision to largely orient this paper in terms of settler colonial theory. For my Settler Colonialism paper, I would integrate analysis of events that happened in the colony which involved the Sierra Leone Company and the Temne. That said, Suzanne Schwarz wrote an article just published last year that largely did this work; I cited it in both of my

papers. This article is what ultimately pushed me to focus on perceptions of the Temne because it focused on land in the way I had originally intended. Given the work that Schwarz has already done, I think that I could incorporate some of her sources and see if my findings about the Company's discussions of the Temne translated or did not translate to other records of their interactions with the Temne.

Suppression, Representation, and Bias: The Sierra Leone Company, Anna Maria Falconbridge, and Portrayals of Indigenous Africans, 1791-1802

“Their most unifying characteristic was their poverty.”<sup>1</sup> This was historian Stephen J. Braidwood’s description of London’s black population in the 1780s. Various circumstances had brought this black population to London. Some found work there as either “seamen or servants.”<sup>2</sup> Most, however, were refugees of the Revolutionary War who fought for the British and were “discharged” to England after the conclusion of the war.<sup>3</sup> Regardless of how they ended up in London, the city’s black population were collectively in quite dire straits by the mid-1780s. The vast majority did not have jobs and were forced to fight for their existence on the streets.<sup>4</sup>

In 1786, the general public began to show concern for the plight of its black population. On January 10<sup>th</sup>, a group of humanitarians—including the abolitionist Granville Sharp—founded the Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor in London.<sup>5</sup> At first, relief came in the form of material goods. The committee set up two relief centers in London where poor blacks could “apply...to get broth, a piece of meat, and a two-penny loaf.”<sup>6</sup> As word spread

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen J. Braidwood, *Black Poor and White Philanthropists: London’s Blacks and the Foundation of the Sierra Leone Settlement 1786-1791* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1994), 269.

<sup>2</sup> Braidwood, *Black Poor*, 269.

<sup>3</sup> Braidwood, 269.

<sup>4</sup> Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and Their Global Quest for Liberty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 80.

<sup>5</sup> Ikuko Asaka, *Tropical Freedom: Climate, Settler Colonialism, and Black Exclusion in the Age of Emancipation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 25; Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 103.

<sup>6</sup> Pybus, 107.

and more black people came to seek relief, however, it quickly became clear that short-term relief was not going to solve the issue of black poverty because “the fundamental cause was chronic unemployment.”<sup>7</sup> Once they had come to this realization, the Committee began developing plans to “send the black poor to a place where they would be able to become independent and self-sufficient.”<sup>8</sup> After determining that Nova Scotia would not be suitable, the committee decided on Sierra Leone after a botanist named Henry Smeathman proposed to Sharp that a colony in Sierra Leone could both “compete with the slave trade” and give the “black refugees” a stable living, a proposal which Sharp enthusiastically endorsed.<sup>9</sup> After a recruitment process that lasted for the remainder of 1786, the group of settlers that agreed to go to Sierra Leone departed from England in February 1787 and arrived in May.<sup>10</sup>

The settlement, known as the “Province of Freedom,” did not fare well.<sup>11</sup> The settlers found themselves unable to grow anything or build shelters because they did not have the necessary materials. The prospect of starvation forced many settlers to work at slave factories near the settlement. Furthermore, the settlers had conflict with an indigenous people group called the Temne. When Captain Thomas Boulden Thompson purchased the land on behalf of the settlers

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<sup>7</sup> Pybus, 107.

<sup>8</sup> Pybus, 107.

<sup>9</sup> Pybus, 108.

<sup>10</sup> Pybus, 110-116; Christopher Fyfe, introduction to *Anna Maria Falconbridge: Narrative of Two Voyages to the River Sierra Leone during the Years 1791-1792-1793 and the Journal of Isaac Dubois with Alexander Falconbridge: An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*, ed. Christopher Fyfe (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 2-3.

<sup>11</sup> Paul E. Lovejoy and Suzanne Schwarz, “Sierra Leone in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” in *Slavery, Abolition and the Transition to Colonialism in Sierra Leone*, ed. Paul E. Lovejoy and Suzanne Schwarz (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2015), 2.

in May 1787, he was under the impression that he had made “a full and final settlement for the land.”<sup>12</sup> The “paramount” Temne chief of the region, King Naimbana, did not share this understanding because he thought of the agreement as “authorization for a temporary settlement,” not as a “sale.”<sup>13</sup> This misunderstanding prompted disputes with the Temne which continued for the duration of this first settlement. These disputes reached their culmination when King Jimmy became the settlement’s landlord. King Jimmy was “in constant conflict with the settlers,” conflict which reached its culmination in December 1789 when he burned the settlement (which had come to be named Granville Town) to the ground.<sup>14</sup>

After this, Sharp turned to some of his prominent abolitionist friends, including Henry Thornton and William Wilberforce. He wanted them to create a “trading company” that would support the Province of Freedom economically.<sup>15</sup> In Sharp’s proposal, this organization would receive financial backing from

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<sup>12</sup> Suzanne Schwarz, “Land and Settlement: Temne Responses to British Abolitionist Intervention in Sierra Leone in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries,” *African Economic History* 49, no. 1 (2021): 225.

<sup>13</sup> Schwarz, “Land and Settlement,” 225. A brief note on spelling: The name Naimbana is spelled as such in the Schwarz article referenced here but is spelled “Naimbanna” in the primary sources this paper analyzes. As a result, this paper will maintain the spelling “Naimbanna” in primary source quotations and will use “Naimbana” when referencing Naimbana outside of quotations.

<sup>14</sup> Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 139-142; Schwarz, “Land and Settlement,” 228. The events that led up to this were complex. In the middle of 1789, King Jimmy had captured an American longboat transporting rum to a nearby slave factory called Bance Island. According to Cassandra Pybus, he “murdered the American sailors, sold the boat to the French depot, and kept the rum for himself.” In response, midshipmen from the HMS *Pomona* attempted to “remonstrate” with King Jimmy. During this process, a spark from a musket accidentally set a thatch hut on fire, which led to King Jimmy’s entire village being burned to the ground. Forty villagers died. When the *Pomona* left Sierra Leone in November 1789, King Jimmy gave the settlers at Granville Town three days to evacuate the village. He then burned it to the ground. See Pybus, 141-42, and Schwarz, 228.

<sup>15</sup> Pybus, 142.

subscribers that would support both an economic alternative to the slave trade in Africa and an initiative to spread Christianity.<sup>16</sup> These concepts became realized in the Sierra Leone Company. After the Company held its first meeting in February 1791, they hired a former slave ship surgeon named Alexander Falconbridge as a commercial agent and sent him to Sierra Leone in early 1791 to “re-establish...the colony of free blacks begun four years earlier.”<sup>17</sup> By April, Falconbridge had negotiated a land transfer with the Temne chief Naimbana for a new settlement “several miles to the east of the original site.”<sup>18</sup> The Company was incorporated by the House of Commons on June 6, 1791.<sup>19</sup> The first settlers of this new colony, which was named Freetown, arrived in the spring of 1792.<sup>20</sup> During the initial decade of the colony in the 1790s, settlers came from multiple parts of the world including Nova Scotia and Jamaica.<sup>21</sup> This created many encounters in the colony, namely those between the settlers and British colonial agents, between the settlers and indigenous Africans, and between the British and the Temne. This paper will explore the latter set of interactions.

In a 2008 article, Isaac Land and Andrew M. Schocket argued that “the act of founding Freetown was an exercise of power, an exercise undertaken with

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<sup>16</sup> Pybus, 142.

<sup>17</sup> Deirdre Coleman, introduction to *Maiden Voyages and Infant Colonies: Two Women's Travel Narratives of the 1790s* (London: Leicester University Press), 3; Pybus, 142.

<sup>18</sup> Pybus, 144.

<sup>19</sup> Pybus, 142-44.

<sup>20</sup> James Sidbury, “African’ Settlers in the Founding of Freetown,” in Lovejoy and Schwarz, eds., *Slavery*, 127.

<sup>21</sup> For more on these groups of settlers, see Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, Ch. 9, 11-12, and Sidbury, “African’ Settlers,” 127-41.



very little consideration of the peoples already resident or living nearby.”<sup>22</sup> Land and Schocket also asserted that, in the midst of the British exercise of power, “the locals did their best to conduct diplomacy and trade with the new colony on their own terms.”<sup>23</sup> In an article in the same journal issue, Philip Misevich went slightly further than Land and Schocket in his assessment of indigenous agency by claiming that “indigenous inhabitants” were primarily responsible for the growth of the “commercial networks that ensured Freetown’s early survival and subsequent growth.”<sup>24</sup> This paper will build upon Land and Schocket’s understanding of power dynamics. It will explore the ways British colonial actors and observers in Sierra Leone perceived the Africans with whom they interacted and presented them to their readers. It will also complicate Land and Schocket’s simplified understanding of power’s role in the founding of Freetown by emphasizing the Sierra Leone Company’s stated aims to create friendship with indigenous Africans. Although power undoubtedly shaped colonial relations in Sierra Leone, discourses of friendship should not be swept aside because they figured prominently in the Sierra Leone Company’s writings.

Scholars have written extensively about Afro-British settlers in Sierra Leone. Cassandra Pybus has specifically highlighted the tension between the Nova Scotian settlers and the Sierra Leone Company. The Company was not able to give the settlers the amount of land they had promised, and it forced the

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<sup>22</sup> Isaac Land and Andrew M. Schocket, “New Approaches to the Founding of the Sierra Leone Colony, 1786–1808,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 9, no. 3 (2008): n.p.

<sup>23</sup> Land and Schocket, “New Approaches,” n.p.

<sup>24</sup> Philip Misevich, “The Sierra Leone Hinterland and the Provisioning of Early Freetown, 1792–1803,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 9, no. 3 (Winter 2008): n.p.

settlers to accept plots of land away from the waterfront, which provided the primary means of “communication and transport.”<sup>25</sup> When two settlers, Isaac Anderson and Cato Perkins, presented a petition to the directors in which they feared the Company would break the promises made to them, it came to nothing. Pybus argues that this was because Perkins and Anderson “had not a hope in heaven of convincing the directors that injustice was a feature of their great scheme for Africa.”<sup>26</sup> Ikuko Asaka places the Sierra Leone Company’s recruitment of formerly enslaved Africans within a racial discourse that viewed black people’s bodies as ideal for tropical climates.<sup>27</sup>

Recent scholarship has also examined relationships between the Afro-British settlers and the Temne. James Sidbury argues that the ways of the Temne “constituted a challenge to...the divinely appointed mission” of the Nova Scotians, which was to Christianize and civilize Africa.<sup>28</sup> Despite this tension, Nova Scotians were occasionally able to live harmoniously with the Temne. In one instance, a group of Nova Scotians moved onto Temne land after growing frustrated at the Company’s delay in giving them land as it had promised.<sup>29</sup> Because issues involving the Afro-British settlers have been extensively discussed in the historiography of Sierra Leone, this paper will focus on relations

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<sup>25</sup> Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 171, 173.

<sup>26</sup> Pybus, 175-76.

<sup>27</sup> Asaka, *Tropical Freedom*, 2-3, 29.

<sup>28</sup> Sidbury, “‘African’ Settlers,” 131-32.

<sup>29</sup> Sidbury, 134.

between the British and the Temne, which have not been examined as thoroughly.<sup>30</sup>

Issues of land have also received attention in Sierra Leone historiography. Although dated, Dorjahn and Fyfe's article remains essential for understanding land dynamics in Sierra Leone. Dorjahn and Fyfe point out that the Sierra Leone Company disrupted the traditional landlord-stranger dynamic in the area of Sierra Leone where the Company established their colony. In this dynamic, the stranger was understood to be "in a subordinate position and his inferior status was marked in various ways."<sup>31</sup> The Sierra Leone Company did not accept this "inferior" position and attempted to use its power to "challenge or influence the indigenous political authorities."<sup>32</sup> According to Dorjahn and Fyfe, this tension over landlord authority was one of the issues that provoked the 1801 war between the Temne and the colony.<sup>33</sup> In an article published this year, Suzanne Schwarz also examines land disputes between the Sierra Leone Company and the Temne. Schwarz argues that Company claims that the Temne attack in 1801 was unwarranted were "disingenuous" because the Temne had repeatedly expressed their concerns "about territorial rights, sovereignty, and land usage over the course of more than a decade."<sup>34</sup> She instead identifies the Sierra Leone Company as the aggressive party, declaring that the Sierra Leone Company

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<sup>30</sup> For more on this, see my discussion of Schwarz's "Land and Settlement" on pp. 6-7.

<sup>31</sup> V.R. Dorjahn and Christopher Fyfe, "Landlord and Stranger: Change in Tenancy Relations in Sierra Leone," *Journal of African History* 3, no. 3 (1962): 397.

<sup>32</sup> Dorjahn and Fyfe, "Landlord and Stranger," 397.

<sup>33</sup> Dorjahn and Fyfe, 395-96.

<sup>34</sup> Schwarz, "Land and Settlement," 223-24.

“took swift and aggressive measures to expel [the Temne] from large areas of the peninsula.”<sup>35</sup>

Sierra Leone historiography has also undertaken a significant shift in the past ten years which places a greater focus upon indigenous Africans. Paul E. Lovejoy and Suzanne Schwarz have recently pointed out that histories of Sierra Leone traditionally began with the arrival of settlers.<sup>36</sup> As a corrective, they argue that Sierra Leone’s history should be understood “in a wider African context that takes into account the rich histories of indigenous communities in shaping events on the upper Guinea coast.”<sup>37</sup> Likewise, Joseph J. Bangura has called Sierra Leone historiography of the past half century “narrow” and “Western-centric” because of its emphasis on the history related to settlers, whose descendants eventually became known as “Creoles” or “Krios.”<sup>38</sup> Bangura thus advocates for histories of Sierra Leone that emphasize “the significant contributions of disparate indigenous groups in the colony’s history.”<sup>39</sup> In her article discussed above, Schwarz responds to what she identifies as the indirect focus on Temne land that is present in much of Sierra Leone historiography by “[shifting] the focus of debate” to emphasize Temne responses to the Sierra Leone Company’s attempts to take and use land in the Sierra Leone peninsula.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Schwarz, “Land and Settlement,” 237.

<sup>36</sup> Lovejoy and Schwarz, “Sierra Leone,” 1.

<sup>37</sup> Lovejoy and Schwarz, “Sierra Leone,” 5.

<sup>38</sup> Joseph J. Bangura, *The Temne of Sierra Leone: African Agency in the Making of a British Colony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 6-7.

<sup>39</sup> Bangura, *Temne of Sierra Leone*, 7.

<sup>40</sup> Schwarz, “Land and Settlement,” 224.

This paper seeks to contribute to the emphasis on indigenous Africans in the Sierra Leonean historiographical conversation by examining the encounters between the British and the Temne, specifically the attitudes and ideas that motivated the British.<sup>41</sup> It is important to note at this point that the sources used in this paper were produced by the British and thus come from a British perspective. As a result, this paper will not be able to fully consider “the rich histories of indigenous communities” as Lovejoy and Schwarz recommend.<sup>42</sup> That said, while acknowledging the imperial bias of the sources, it will emphasize the indigenous perspective to the extent that it is possible. There is much insight to be gained from the way indigenous Africans are portrayed in these documents. These portrayals can inform historical understanding of the way British colonial officials and British travelers understood indigenous Africans. Contradictions between portrayals can give historians insight into the discourse surrounding indigenous Africans during the time the sources were produced.

This is the sort of work this paper will undertake. It will offer an overview of how various British people including the directors of the Sierra Leone Company and travelers such as Anna Maria Falconbridge understood indigenous Africans.

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<sup>41</sup> A brief note on terminology: This paper mostly refers to the Temne specifically, but it will sometimes use the general term “indigenous Africans.” This is because some of the references to indigenous Africans in the primary sources do not refer to specific people groups. For example, the Sierra Leone Company stated its desire to “cultivate the general friendship of the natives” in its first report. Through the help of secondary sources such as Schwarz’s “Land and Settlement” and Pybus’s *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, the author was able to deduce that many of the events discussed in both the reports and this paper involved the Temne. This is why the author mostly uses the term “Temne.” For the quotation from the Sierra Leone Company report, see Sierra Leone Company, *Substance of the Report of the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company to the General Court, Held at London on Wednesday the 19<sup>th</sup> of October, 1791* (London, 1791), 50.

<sup>42</sup> Lovejoy and Schwarz, “Sierra Leone,” 5.

Regarding the history of the colony of Sierra Leone, it will determine the Sierra Leone Company's outlook toward indigenous Africans and how it sought to interact with them and include them in their plans in the first few years of the colony. While the Sierra Leone Company stated that it wanted to create friendship with indigenous Africans, its reports expose its actual desire to control and suppress them and their perspectives.

Through drawing this conclusion from the Company's writings, this paper furthers Schwarz's work. While Schwarz focuses on the Sierra Leone Company's actions toward the Temne from the period of c. 1791-1801, this paper focuses on the way that the Sierra Leone Company represented the Temne in their writings to people in the metropole. Also, Schwarz claims that a "hostile depiction of the Temne...dominated Company accounts from at least 1802."<sup>43</sup> This paper adds nuance to Schwarz's assertion by arguing that the Company showed a tendency toward this hostility from its earliest report in 1791 because it suppressed and distorted Temne viewpoints in its reports and in its record of the education of Naimbana's—the "paramount" Temne chief—son.<sup>44</sup>

Company suppression of Temne points of view becomes especially clear when one compares the Sierra Leone Company's reports to Anna Maria Falconbridge's *Two Voyages to Sierra Leone*, which she partially wrote while accompanying her first husband, Alexander Falconbridge, to Sierra Leone when he attempted to reestablish the settlement in 1791.<sup>45</sup> Falconbridge's account is

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<sup>43</sup> Schwarz, "Land and Settlement," 225.

<sup>44</sup> Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 142.

<sup>45</sup> Coleman, introduction, 3, 28.

much more charitable to the Temne and to indigenous Africans in general. While still marked by a sense of European superiority, Falconbridge's account is freer of the negative bias toward Temne views and policies that the Sierra Leone Company's reports have.<sup>46</sup> The juxtaposition of the Sierra Leone Company's writings and Falconbridge's travel account indicates that British understandings of indigenous Africans were not unified at this time. Each writing represents an attempt to depict indigenous Africans to a British audience. Examining the Sierra Leone Company's reports in this context reveals that it downplayed, neglected to explain, or actively suppressed Temne viewpoints.

According to the 1791 report to its subscribers and proprietors, the Sierra Leone Company had every intention of creating a jovial, harmonious relationship with indigenous Africans.<sup>47</sup> The Company laid out this objective clearly by identifying goals to "[lay] a foundation of happiness to the natives" and to "cultivate the general friendship of the natives."<sup>48</sup>

In the Sierra Leone Company's eyes, there was reason for optimism about these prospects of friendship with indigenous Africans because it believed indigenous Africans "[appeared] extremely desirous of all kind of European knowledge and improvement."<sup>49</sup> Thus, a harmonious relationship with indigenous Africans was possible because indigenous Africans would be receptive to their civilizing plans for them. As evidence for this claim, the Sierra Leone Company relied exclusively

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<sup>46</sup> Coleman, introduction, 28.

<sup>47</sup> Sierra Leone Company, *Report, 1791*, Front Matter.

<sup>48</sup> Sierra Leone Company, *Report, 1791*, 49-50.

<sup>49</sup> Sierra Leone Company, *Report, 1791*, 15.

on their relationship with the Temne chief King Naimbana.<sup>50</sup> The Company informed their subscribers that Naimbana sent his eldest son “straight to London, by Mr. Falconbridge, with a letter to Mr. Granville Sharp, asking him to direct his education.”<sup>51</sup> According to the Company, “both the king’s son, and the king himself, appear to have the strongest desire to rescue their country from its present state of ignorance and wretchedness.”<sup>52</sup> Therefore, friendship with indigenous Africans was possible because they wanted it as well.

To solidify this inclination toward friendship, the Company included an extract from the letter that Naimbana sent to Sharp. In this letter, Naimbana expressed his positive outlook on the initial settlement. According to the letter, Naimbana “endeavoured to keep peace between them and my people, and also among themselves by settling a great many disquiets between them.”<sup>53</sup> Naimbana claimed that it was a “pleasure” to help the settlers because he “thought they would become useful to us all in this country, by teaching us things we know not.”<sup>54</sup> Indeed, Naimbana considered it to be obvious that “the most ignorant people in the world would be glad to see their country made good if they had idea how it might be done.”<sup>55</sup> Naimbana’s phrasing appeared to confirm the Sierra Leone Company’s claim that Africans were receptive to the civilizational advances that the British colonial officials had to offer. Upon deeper reading,

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<sup>50</sup> Bangura, *Temne of Sierra Leone*, 6.

<sup>51</sup> Sierra Leone Company, *Report, 1791*, 17.

<sup>52</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 17.

<sup>53</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 18.

<sup>54</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 18.

<sup>55</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 18.



however, it becomes clear that Naimbana maintained control and did not intend to comprehensively accept all that the settlers could teach him. While he did not go into specifics, Naimbana welcomed help when he thought it would benefit his people. This selective understanding of benefit indicated a certain level of agency. His hope that the Company would “[teach] us things we knew not” implied that there were things that he knew which thus did not require improvement according to the Company’s instruction.<sup>56</sup>

Furthermore, historians have alluded to the fact that Naimbana did not fit the perception of an African that totally welcomed European civilization solely for its own sake.<sup>57</sup> Schwarz makes it clear that there was a good amount of calculation involved in Naimbana’s approach to the British because he thought it would be beneficial to have “a large trading settlement under his control.”<sup>58</sup> As referenced earlier in this paper, Land and Schocket pointed out that the Temne attempted to “conduct diplomacy and trade with the new colony on their own terms.”<sup>59</sup> These scholars demonstrate that Naimbana clearly had his own agenda when interacting with the colony. What is of significance for this paper, however, is that the Sierra Leone Company did not present that interaction in this manner to its subscribers. Rather, it made it seem like he helped the colonists solely for their benefit and to make them happy. This was not the case. Naimbana had his

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<sup>56</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 18.

<sup>57</sup> The approach of providing historical context which is employed in this paragraph and on pp. 15-17 is influenced by Marisa J. Fuentes, who suggests using “spatial and historical context” to “[fill] out minuscule fragmentary mentions” of people marginalized by colonial historical records. See Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Violence, Enslaved Women, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 4.

<sup>58</sup> Schwarz, “Land and Settlement,” 226.

<sup>59</sup> Land and Schocket, “New Approaches,” n.p.

own intentions in mind. He was not an innocent African waiting to be schooled in the ways of the Europeans. The fact that the Sierra Leone Company presented him in this way meant that they distorted Naimbana's actual motivations.

Naimbana also included a bit of language which indicated that relations between him and the British colonial officials were not as harmonious as the Sierra Leone Company attempted to present them. Toward the end of his letter, Naimbana said, "I ever was partial to the people of Great Britain, for which cause I have put up with a great deal of insults from them, more than I should from any other country."<sup>60</sup> In the letter, Naimbana did not go into detail about the types of insults that he had received from the British. He also did not specify whether these insults came from British slave traders or from those associated with the colony. This information cannot be conclusively known, but Naimbana's inclusion of this statement in his letter indicated that he believed the insults were worth mentioning. Naimbana was not entering into this relationship with the Sierra Leone Company with a completely favorable view of the British. His previous negative experiences meant that he approached this new relationship with a certain level of caution. This dimension of Naimbana's attitude should not be overlooked because it complicates the Sierra Leone Company's portrayal of Naimbana as being completely receptive to the colony's presence. Naimbana appeared to be willing to pursue a harmonious relationship with the Sierra Leone Company, but he was also wary because of his past interactions with the British.

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<sup>60</sup> Sierra Leone Company, *Report*, 1791, 19.

Naimbana's statement here demonstrated a tension between himself and the Sierra Leone Company that the Sierra Leone Company largely overlooked because it did not consider that part of the letter to be especially significant. Overall, it believed that the letter established "the friendship subsisting between King Naimbanna and the Sierra Leone Company" to such a degree that the "General Court will no doubt approve of a resolution" by the Company to "take upon themselves the charge of his son's education so long as he may remain in England."<sup>61</sup> The Company did not offer any comment about the portion of the letter where Naimbana spoke of the insults he had received from the British. Now, it must be stated that it would have been highly unlikely for the Company to do so because it wrote it the report for its subscribers and proprietors, who financially backed the Company.<sup>62</sup> That likelihood, however, actually supports the argument this paper is making because this motivation would have prompted the Company to suppress or downplay any aspects of Temne viewpoints that raised concern. This was what it did here by ignoring Naimbana's comments about receiving insults from the British. It selectively interpreted the letter in such a way that would please subscribers and further its missions. Thus, it did not render the concerns expressed by a key member of the Temne as significant.

The Sierra Leone Company's discussion of indigenous Africans in general and the Temne in particular in their first report revealed that its idea of friendship carried an agenda with it. The Company intended the inclusion of Naimbana's

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<sup>61</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 19-20.

<sup>62</sup> Sierra Leone Company, Front Matter.

letter to serve as proof that the Temne wished to participate in this vision of friendship. The format of this letter, however, revealed that the Company had selective understanding of what Naimbana said. By presenting him as receptive to European civilization and eager to “rescue [his] country from ignorance and wretchedness,” the Company distorted his true intentions to interact with the colony in such a way that did not involve the total acceptance of European civilization.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, the Company ignored his acknowledgement of insults received from the British. The narrative present in its first report indicated that the Company intended to control the parameters of its relationship with indigenous Africans in Sierra Leone and to suppress their perspectives when those perspectives conflicted with the Company’s perspectives.

Eight years after the record of Naimbana’s letter to Sharp regarding his son’s education, the Sierra Leone Company included a memoir of Naimbana’s son’s education in its 1799 report.<sup>64</sup> The memoir detailed his time in England and the education he received. The memoir reveals the ways in which the Sierra Leone Company sought to teach indigenous Africans. The Sierra Leone Company flatly stated that “making him a good christian” was the ultimate object of his education; in fact, the Company thought that “nothing could have a better

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<sup>63</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 17.

<sup>64</sup> There is no date given in the 1791 report for Naimbana’s letter. Also, the analysis conducted here will use “Naimbanna’s son” as his title because there were different names given for him in different documents. The 1791 Sierra Leone Company report calls him John Frederic, and the memoir analyzed here calls him Henry Granville. See Sierra Leone Company, 16, and Sierra Leone Company, *Substance of the Reports Delivered by the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, to the General Court of Proprietors. To Which Is Prefixed Memoirs of Naimbanna, An African Prince* (Philadelphia, 1799), 16.

effect in promoting their benevolent schemes.”<sup>65</sup> A critical reading of this document, however, reveals that making Naimbana’s son a Christian was not the Company’s only objective. Rather, it was also intent on extinguishing his views.

In the memoir, the Company recorded an episode in which some “friends” took Naimbana’s son to the House of Commons to “hear a debate on the slave-trade.”<sup>66</sup> During the debate, Banastre Tarleton offered a vigorous defense of the slave trade that greatly angered Naimbana’s son because of the way he portrayed Africans. In fact, after Naimbana’s son left the House of Commons, “he exclaimed with great vehemence and indignation, that he would kill that man wherever he met him” because he told lies about Africans.<sup>67</sup> To Naimbana’s son, Tarleton’s claim that Africans “would not work” was a glaring lie.<sup>68</sup> Naimbana’s son made it clear that “his countrymen would work; but Englishmen would not buy work; they would buy only men.”<sup>69</sup>

In response, his instructors “told him, he should not be so angry with colonel Tarlton; for perhaps he had been misinformed, and knew no better.”<sup>70</sup> His instructors also turned to the Bible as a corrective for Naimbana’s son’s anger. They informed Naimbana’s son that “he had no right to kill him; for God says, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.*”<sup>71</sup> The Company then stated in

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<sup>65</sup> Sierra Leone Company, *Memoirs of Naimbanna*, 7.

<sup>66</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 10.

<sup>67</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 10.

<sup>68</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 10.

<sup>69</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 10.

<sup>70</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 10.

<sup>71</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 10. The biblical passage (in Italics) is from Romans 12:9. The author found the verse by searching the phrase “Vengeance is mine” on biblegateway.com. “Vengeance Is Mine” search results, Bible Gateway, accessed December 20, 2021, <https://www.biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?quicksearch=vengeance+is+mine&version=KJV>.

the memoir that, after being confronted with this Bible verse, Naimbana's son "never afterwards expressed the least indignation at colonel Tarleton; but would have been ready to have shewn him any friendly office, if it had fallen his way."<sup>72</sup>

Naimbana's son likely would not have cared about what Tarleton knew or did not know. What Naimbana's son did know was that a powerful British man was maligning his people in the halls of British power. The people that were educating him, however, took no heed of his side of the story. Rather, they effectively told Naimbana's son to give Tarleton the benefit of the doubt because Tarleton might not have his facts right. They also told Naimbana's son that his anger went against the Bible. They thus placed the active impetus for change on Naimbana's son. It could not have been easy for Naimbana's son to make this change because his instructors wanted him to repress anger that was rooted in an inaccurate representation of his people. The Sierra Leone Company did not record the process by which Naimbana's son transitioned from hostility towards Tarleton to friendliness towards Tarleton. Their account did, however, remain silent about what happened to Naimbana's son's views in defense of his own people. This silence represented the disappearance of this issue from the Sierra Leone Company's concerns and the disappearance of Naimbana's son's opinions.

Indeed, the way in which those who educated Naimbana's son on behalf of the Sierra Leone Company responded to his anger represented a suppression of his views in defense of his own people. Rather than addressing the reason

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<sup>72</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 10.

Naimbana's son was angry in any substantive way, they focused solely on his anger. By doing this, they also sought to rid Naimbana's son of the views that made him angry in the first place. What is of significance here is that they gave Tarleton the benefit of the doubt instead of Naimbana's son. This indicated that Naimbana's son's instructors were more willing to side with Tarleton than they were with Naimbana's son. Thus, Naimbana's son needed to reform both his anger and his views.

The memoir of Naimbana's son illustrated the controlling tendency of the Sierra Leone Company toward the Temne. The Company was not merely interested in making Naimbana's son a Christian. On the other hand, it wished to extinguish his views which were in defense of his own people. When it recorded Naimbana's son's change of disposition, the memoir also implicitly left behind the substance of his critique. This meant that it wished to silence the issue both in Naimbana's son and for its subscribers. Naimbana's son's memoir acted as an example of the control the Sierra Leone Company sought to have over the mindset of the Temne.

While evidence of the Sierra Leone Company's inclination to suppress viewpoints expressed by Temne people is evident in its own writings, another account from the last decade of the eighteenth century also exposed this inclination. This was Anna Maria Falconbridge's travel account. Falconbridge's travel account does a good deal to problematize the Sierra Leone Company's presentation of the Temne. Falconbridge wrote of her experience accompanying her first husband, Alexander Falconbridge, to Sierra Leone on his mission to "re-

establish...the colony of free blacks begun four years earlier.”<sup>73</sup> Falconbridge published this account as a direct response to the Sierra Leone Company’s 1794 report, which attacked the character and work of her first and second husbands—Alexander Falconbridge and Isaac DuBois—and “[impugned] the character of the Nova Scotian blacks... representing them as disobedient, disrespectful and ungrateful children.”<sup>74</sup> Although the account was published in 1794, the events discussed in this paper occurred in February and May of 1791 when she accompanied her husband on his mission to reestablish the settlement.

In addition to its discussions of her husbands and the Nova Scotians, Falconbridge’s account included descriptions of indigenous Africans. Falconbridge depicted indigenous Africans in ways that were entirely different from the Sierra Leone Company. Literary scholar Deirdre Coleman points out that Falconbridge’s account is “relatively unmarked by the commonplaces of racist hostility so often applied by travellers to African natives.”<sup>75</sup> In the context of this paper, Falconbridge’s discussion of indigenous Africans is noteworthy not solely because it lacks hostility. It is also noteworthy because it includes fuller disclosures of Temne viewpoints than the Sierra Leone Company. It also demonstrates her perception of the control that indigenous Africans had over the landscape which would eventually house the colony that her husband attempted to reestablish. The contrast of Falconbridge’s description of Temne viewpoints

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<sup>73</sup> Coleman, introduction, 3.

<sup>74</sup> Coleman, 5.

<sup>75</sup> Coleman, 10.



with that of the Sierra Leone Company reveals that the Sierra Leone Company either misunderstood or purposefully misrepresented its relationship with the Temne because Falconbridge's perspectives were much more defensive of and deferent toward the Temne. It is not possible to know which of the two was true. Either way, Falconbridge's account requires its readers to approach the Sierra Leone Company's understanding of both indigenous Africans in general and the Temne in particular with skepticism.

Before entering into extensive analysis of Falconbridge's account, Falconbridge's motives for writing it must be discussed. Falconbridge begins the preface by confessing that she had "some idea" of publishing the letters which comprised her account while she wrote them.<sup>76</sup> She also identified "vindication of herself" as a motivation for publishing the account.<sup>77</sup> These motivations certainly reveal the possibility that Falconbridge distorted some of her material to promote herself.<sup>78</sup> This acknowledgement does not, however, render Falconbridge's account as not valuable for historical analysis. Rather, Falconbridge's account is significant as an interpretation of indigenous Africans and their power, not as an accurate record of what happened. Thus, the following analysis of Falconbridge's account does not assume that her claims are completely accurate and unbiased. With full understanding of the process behind their creation, it renders them

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<sup>76</sup> Anna Maria Falconbridge, *Two Voyages to Sierra Leone, during the Years 1791-2-3, In a Series of Letters, By Anna Maria Falconbridge. To Which Is Added, a Letter from the Author, to Henry Thornton, Esq. M.P. and Chairman of the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company*, 2nd ed. (London, 1794), v.

<sup>77</sup> Falconbridge, *Two Voyages*, vii.

<sup>78</sup> Coleman, introduction, 5, 7.

significant for the way they portray indigenous Africans and for the ways in which those portrayals are different from those of the Sierra Leone Company.

A striking example of Falconbridge including a Temne viewpoint occurred when she included Naimbana offering a justification for King Jimmy burning down Granville Town.<sup>79</sup> In February 1791, Falconbridge wrote of her husband accompanying Naimbana and his secretary, Elliotte, on an errand. While on the errand, Mr. Falconbridge “complained much of King Jemmy’s injustice, in driving the settlers away, and burning their town.”<sup>80</sup> According to Falconbridge, Naimbana answered that “Jimmy was partly right.”<sup>81</sup> He then went on to explain that “the people had brought it on themselves” because they “had taken part with some Americans with whom Jemmy had a dispute,” which caused Jimmy to develop “ill will” against them.<sup>82</sup> Thus, Naimbana viewed Jimmy’s anger against the settlers as justified because they had sided against him. Furthermore, Naimbana thought that Jimmy had acted toward the settlers “as well as they merited” since “he gave them three days notice before he burned their town, that they might remove themselves and all their effects away.”<sup>83</sup> In Naimbana’s eyes, Jimmy had been sufficiently merciful to the settlers by giving them time to leave and take their possessions before he burned down the settlement. He could have

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<sup>79</sup> For background on the burning of Granville Town, see n4 on p. 1 of this paper.

<sup>80</sup> Falconbridge, *Two Voyages*, 34.

<sup>81</sup> Falconbridge, 35.

<sup>82</sup> Falconbridge, 35. The difference in spelling of “Jemmy” here is because the name appears as “Jemmy” in Falconbridge’s account but as “Jimmy” in current secondary scholarship. For an example, see Schwarz, “Land and Settlement,” 227.

<sup>83</sup> Falconbridge, 35.

burned it down unexpectedly and caused much more devastation, but he chose not to do so.

With her inclusion of this justification, Falconbridge offered a perspective of Temne actions that was much more sympathetic than any account ever offered by the Sierra Leone Company. The Sierra Leone Company flatly stated in its 1791 report that “little or no blame appears to be imputable to the settlers.”<sup>84</sup> Although perhaps unintentionally, Falconbridge’s portrayal of Naimbana’s defense of Jimmy calls into question the Sierra Leone Company’s position. From the perspective of a Temne leader (at least as Falconbridge presents it), King Jimmy did not act in an unreasonable or unjust manner. Rather, he defended his own interests and gave the settlers ample time to leave. The contrast of Falconbridge’s portrayal of the settlement burning down and the Company’s reveals the differing levels of priority given to the Temne perspective by the Sierra Leone Company and Falconbridge. Falconbridge’s inclusion of Naimbana’s perspective allowed her readers to see the history of the settlement through Temne eyes. By extension, this exposes the lack of Temne perspective present in the Sierra Leone Company’s account of the events. The Sierra Leone Company showed no interest in considering the reasons why King Jimmy burned down the settlement. Instead, it pushed forward with a version of events in which it was not possible for the settlers to be culpable. With this, the Sierra Leone Company revealed its willingness to ignore Temne perspectives if it contradicted their own.

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<sup>84</sup> Sierra Leone Company, *Report*, 1791, 4.

Falconbridge's respect for the palaver provides another example of her inclusion of the Temne perspective. Palavers were "conferences" held by indigenous chiefs at which they attempted to resolve disputes.<sup>85</sup> According to Falconbridge's account, Naimbana—again speaking through Elliotte—told Mr. Falconbridge that "he...could not prudently re-establish" the settlement "except by consent of all the chiefs—for which purpose he must call a court or palaver."<sup>86</sup> Naimbana said it would take "seven or eight days" before all the chiefs could be assembled.<sup>87</sup> After the chiefs had all assembled, Naimbana would inform Falconbridge about when the palaver would occur. Mrs. Falconbridge stated that Mr. Falconbridge came away from this conversation with the unequivocal understanding that "nothing was to be effected without a palaver."<sup>88</sup> In fact, if Naimbana did not approve of Mr. Falconbridge's proposal to reestablish the colony, Mr. Falconbridge's "views would be frustrated, and his endeavours ineffectual."<sup>89</sup>

With this discussion of the palaver, Mrs. Falconbridge offered a clear understanding of who was in control. She presented the success or failure of her husband's—and, by extension, the Sierra Leone Company's—initiatives as hinging upon the decision of the indigenous African chiefs. Thus, if the chiefs decided against the reestablishment of the colony, it would not happen.

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<sup>85</sup> Sean Kelley, "The Dirty Business of Panyarring and Palaver: Slave Trading on the Upper Guinea Coast in the Eighteenth Century," in Lovejoy and Schwarz, eds., *Slavery*, 99.

<sup>86</sup> Falconbridge, *Two Voyages*, 35.

<sup>87</sup> Falconbridge, 35.

<sup>88</sup> Falconbridge, 35.

<sup>89</sup> Falconbridge, 35.

Falconbridge displayed a respect for this system in her deference to it. She considered the palaver to be a legitimate form of decision-making and believed that the Company had to act according to its conclusions if the colony was to succeed or to be established at all. Falconbridge's portrayal of the palaver unmistakably presented the indigenous Africans as those in control.

Moreover, an episode at a palaver that Falconbridge attended deepened her understanding of indigenous control. During King Jimmy's speech at this palaver in May 1791, a group of bystanders "frequently interrupted him by clapping of hands and shouts of. *Ya Hoo! Ya Hoo! Ya Hoo!* and other tokens of applause."<sup>90</sup> When this happened, Falconbridge said her "heart quivered with fear least they might be forming some treacherous contrivance."<sup>91</sup> Falconbridge's fear at this event again revealed her understanding that she and her husband were at the mercy of indigenous Africans. The most striking element was that of the unknown. Falconbridge did not know whether these people were forming a "treacherous contrivance."<sup>92</sup> In her mind, that could have been happening because she was in a culture totally foreign to her. Her fear indicated that she believed British plans could be derailed by indigenous Africans at any moment.

The Sierra Leone Company did not share Falconbridge's respect for the palaver. Schwarz has pointed out that colonial officials at Freetown viewed the palaver as "a forum for...drinking...and time-wasting."<sup>93</sup> More specifically, the

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<sup>90</sup> Falconbridge, 55.

<sup>91</sup> Falconbridge, 55.

<sup>92</sup> Falconbridge, 35.

<sup>93</sup> Schwarz, "Land and Settlement," 239.

Company believed that the palaver led to irrational decision-making by African chiefs, a belief that manifested itself in the Company's account of King Jimmy's burning of Granville Town in its 1794 report. During the course of making the eventual decision to burn down Granville Town, the Company reported that "a palaver or council was called of all the surrounding Chiefs."<sup>94</sup> The Company then stated that this palaver led the chiefs to "[follow] the African custom of directing their vengeance for every mischief done to them, against any persons guilty or not guilty, whom they have within their power, and whom they imagine in the smallest degree connected with the authors of the injury, and having heard that in this case two individuals from the neighboring colony were among the hostile party, determined that the whole town of the free settlers should be burned."<sup>95</sup>

In this account, the Company identified the palaver as being the site at which African chiefs made an unreasonable decision. The language the Company used to describe the decision to burn down Granville Town made it clear that it thought the decision was unjust and disproportionate to the involvement of people from the settlement. To the Company, Africans did not use discretion when redressing wrongs. Rather, they "[directed] their vengeance" at whomever they could regardless of whether or not they were guilty.<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, the Company believed that Africans did not bother to mete out vengeance to the primary people that had wronged them. Rather, anyone mildly

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<sup>94</sup> Sierra Leone Company, *Substance of the Report Delivered by the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, to the General Court of Proprietors, on Thursday the 27th March, 1794* (London, 1794), 103.

<sup>95</sup> Sierra Leone Company, *Report, 1794*, 103.

<sup>96</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 103.

associated with the wrong was eligible to receive vengeance. The Company considered the decision-making behind burning Granville Town to be illogical, and it identified the palaver as the space where this occurred. Therefore, the Company did not consider the palaver to be any sort of respectable institution.

The juxtaposition of the Sierra Leone Company's portrayal of the palaver and Falconbridge's portrayal of the palaver reveals that there were significant differences in each account. Falconbridge considered the palaver to be much more significant and legitimate than the Sierra Leone Company. In fact, Falconbridge explicitly stated that the Sierra Leone Company would have no success in Africa if the palavers did not rule in their favor. The Sierra Leone Company took on more of a posture of superiority. It believed that the palaver was at the root of the problems it saw in Africa. This was the perspective that the Sierra Leone Company presented to its subscribers and proprietors. Through this presentation, the Company attempted to eliminate the possibility among its subscribers and proprietors of viewing the palaver as a sensible, acceptable form of decision-making. Therefore, it eliminated any kind of serious consideration of an indigenous African viewpoint in defense of the palaver.

This point becomes especially clear when one contrasts the Company's account with that of Falconbridge. Falconbridge's account allows the reader to view the palaver in a more sympathetic light because the Company's condescending bias is absent. Falconbridge presented the palaver as what determined policy in Africa and did not make a judgment about it. This lack of judgment enables the reader to see the palaver on its own and to comprehend its

influence. Conversely, the Sierra Leone Company's interpretation of the palaver meant that it wanted its readers to adapt its views and not consider the possibility that the palaver was a sensible forum for decision-making and dispute resolution.

The Sierra Leone Company's presentation of the Temne in Sierra Leone to its subscribers and proprietors revealed its true desire to control the Temne and to actively suppress Temne perspectives. The Company made it clear that it believed the Temne and Africans in general needed their civilizational influence. The Company attempted to portray the Temne as being totally receptive to their initiatives, but the letter from Naimbana did not paint the situation in as positive a light as they thought. They drew conclusions that deliberately ignored parts of the letter that problematized their perspective. Furthermore, the memoir of Naimbana's son revealed their active desire to eliminate Temne views. Rather than merely imbuing Christian tenets in Naimbana's son, the Company told Naimbana's son that his defense of his people was steeped in non-Christian attitudes that needed to be reformed.

Moreover, Falconbridge's portrayals of the Temne and other indigenous Africans exposed the ways that the Sierra Leone Company suppressed the views of indigenous Africans. Through her descriptions of Naimbana's justification for King Jimmy burning down Granville Town and the palaver, Falconbridge included indigenous perspectives in ways that the Sierra Leone Company did not. Direct comparisons of issues that both Falconbridge and the Sierra Leone Company discussed manifested the Sierra Leone Company's practice of suppressing the views of the Temne.



These contrasting treatments of Temne viewpoints revealed that perceptions of indigenous Africans were tied to conflicting agendas. The Sierra Leone Company presented indigenous Africans in such a way that behooved their agenda of advancing civilization, and Falconbridge presented indigenous Africans in such a way that contradicted the Sierra Leone Company. Given Falconbridge's self-serving motivations, it is not possible to know whether her depictions of Naimbana and Jimmy were entirely truthful or embellished to further her attack against the Company. Nonetheless, when viewing her account and the Sierra Leone Company's writings together, it unfortunately appears that the perspectives of indigenous Africans were used by both of them in ways that they saw fit. Thus, it is difficult—perhaps impossible—to reconstruct true indigenous viewpoints because of the differing ways they are presented in the sources of the colonizer. How, then, should one attempt to understand indigenous Africans when they are depicted by biased, colonial observers?

Although she deals with a different historical context and subject matter, Marisa J. Fuentes provides some helpful answers to this question. In her work about the enslaved and free women of Bridgetown, Barbados, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Fuentes makes some key points about understanding the nature of archives and their depictions of marginalized people.<sup>97</sup> Before beginning her analysis of marginalized people, Fuentes argues that it is imperative to acknowledge the “known biases within particular archives” and to subsequently use “a methodology that purposely subverts the overdetermining power of colonial

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<sup>97</sup> Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 1.

discourses.”<sup>98</sup> As part of this methodology, Fuentes “[reads] *along the bias grain* to eke out extinguished and invisible but no less historically important lives.”<sup>99</sup> This is the sort of methodology this paper has sought to employ. While the Temne figures analyzed in this paper unquestionably had more power than the women Fuentes researched, they still received marginalized treatment in British writings and were subject to British manipulation and dispossession.<sup>100</sup> By acknowledging the biases and motivations of these sources, this paper has illuminated Temne viewpoints amidst the biases of those who recorded them. The author hopes that this paper can contribute to efforts like that of Fuentes, which seek to properly understand those that the historical record marginalizes.

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<sup>98</sup> Fuentes, 4.

<sup>99</sup> Fuentes, 7.

<sup>100</sup> Schwarz, “Land and Settlement,” 237.

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## For Whom and For What? Promises, Perceptions, and the Trajectory of the Settler Colony of Freetown, 1791-1800

In September of 1800, some of the Nova Scotian settlers in Freetown decided they had had enough of the Sierra Leone Company's governance. On September 3<sup>rd</sup>, most of the heads of the Nova Scotian families in Freetown met to draft a new law code. This code excluded the Sierra Leone Company, declaring that the colony's governor only had authority over Company business. When these men displayed the law code a couple of weeks later, Thomas Ludlam, the 23-year-old governor of the colony, tried to arrest many of the men involved for treason. This led to a skirmish during which approximately forty men escaped and camped out on the outskirts of Freetown. About a week later, Ludlam had managed to arrest most of the men. Consequences for those involved were severe. Some lost their land, others were banished from the colony altogether, and two were hanged.<sup>101</sup>

This rebellion did not come out of nowhere. Conflict between the Nova Scotian settlers and the Sierra Leone Company had been a constant in the colony since its inception.<sup>102</sup> The Sierra Leone Company was formed in 1791 by abolitionists and businessmen. It sought to establish a colony in Sierra Leone that would form the basis of a "trading enterprise in Africa" which would "act as

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<sup>101</sup> Cassandra Pybus, "'A Less Favourable Specimen': The Abolitionist Response to Self-Emancipated Slaves in Sierra Leone, 1793-1808," *Parliamentary History* 26 Supplement (2007): 108; Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and Their Global Quest for Liberty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 202.

<sup>102</sup> Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 305.

an alternative to the...slave trade” and propagate Christianity in Africa.<sup>103</sup> The House of Commons incorporated the Company on June 6, 1791, thus giving the Sierra Leone Company control of the colony’s land and the colony’s laws.<sup>104</sup> Now, the Company needed settlers for this colony. They became informed of the situation in Nova Scotia after Thomas Peters, one of the settlers, presented a petition of Nova Scotian grievances in late 1790 that also requested that the Black refugees be able to relocate. Prime minister William Pitt the Younger obliged and offered to pay for the transport of all settlers that wanted to leave Nova Scotia. In addition, the Sierra Leone Company declared that free land grants would be given to each settler in Sierra Leone—twenty acres per man, ten acres per woman, and five acres per child. To recruit new settlers, the Company sent John Clarkson, brother of the abolitionist Thomas Clarkson, as their agent to Nova Scotia.<sup>105</sup> While in Nova Scotia, Clarkson convinced about 1,200 of the Black loyalists living in Nova Scotia to come to Sierra Leone. Clarkson would go on to serve as the first governor of Freetown (the name of the colony in Sierra Leone).<sup>106</sup> These Black loyalists had already faced unmet promises regarding land in Nova Scotia, where they had come after fighting for the British in the American Revolution in exchange for their freedom. Given their past lives as

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<sup>103</sup> Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 142.

<sup>104</sup> Pybus, 144.

<sup>105</sup> Pybus, 148-49.

<sup>106</sup> Pybus, 151, 153. The terms “Black loyalists” and “Nova Scotians” are used interchangeably in this paper. Both reference the group of settlers that left Nova Scotia and settled in Freetown.

slaves and their troubles with land in Nova Scotia, this new promise of land was attractive to them.<sup>107</sup>

When the settlers arrived in 1792, however, it quickly became clear that there was not enough land for each settler to be given the amount of land that they had been promised.<sup>108</sup> The settlers were also prevented from having land along the waterfront, which was essential for effective trade.<sup>109</sup> These issues regarding land, along with other issues such as increased tension surrounding the appointment of new governor William Dawes, led two of the Nova Scotians, Isaac Anderson and Cato Perkins, to take a petition to the Sierra Leone Company in London in 1793. This petition expressed fear that the promises made to the settlers in Nova Scotia that had prompted them to come to Sierra Leone would not be kept. The Sierra Leone Company's chairman, Henry Thornton, did not pay much attention to the petition. After this muted response, Perkins and Anderson presented a follow-up address to the Directors in November 1793. The Directors did not heed the demands of this address either, and Perkins and Anderson returned to Freetown in early 1794 with none of their demands being met.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992; first published 1976 by Longman Group Limited and Dalhousie University Press), 94; Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 8-9, 280; Janet Polasky, *Revolutions without Borders: The Call to Liberty in the Atlantic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 84.

<sup>108</sup> Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 170-71.

<sup>109</sup> Pybus, 171-74.

<sup>110</sup> Pybus, 173-76. The author chose not to examine the original petition of Perkins and Anderson in this paper because he thought the complexity of Perkins and Anderson's follow-up address being included in Falconbridge's narrative and the Company's response to the entire course of events offered sufficient content for analysis.



The conflict between the Nova Scotian settlers and the Sierra Leone Company in the early years of the Freetown colony forms the subject matter of this paper. Within the context of this conflict, the paper will focus primarily on two sources: the Sierra Leone Company's 1794 report to its proprietors and Anna Maria Falconbridge's *Two Voyages to Sierra Leone*, also published in 1794. Falconbridge spent substantial time in Sierra Leone from 1791-1793 because her first husband, Alexander Falconbridge, acquired the land for Freetown on behalf of the Sierra Leone Company and her second husband, Isaac DuBois, was an employee of the Sierra Leone Company.<sup>111</sup>

These two documents are interesting to analyze beside one another because, as literary scholar Deirdre Coleman points out, Falconbridge published *Two Voyages* as a direct response to the Company's 1794 report.<sup>112</sup> Because Falconbridge shaped her work in response to the Sierra Leone Company, a side-by-side analysis of the two is helpful for historical understanding. It can show the ways in which different historical actors understood the same issue, and it can also show the differing motivations and priorities that these actors have when they approach the issue. This paper will engage in such an undertaking.

More specifically, this paper will analyze the different ways in which these sources discussed Perkins and Anderson's journey to London. In the Sierra Leone Company's report, the Company's Directors claimed that Perkins and

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<sup>111</sup> Deirdre Coleman, introduction to *Maiden Voyages and Infant Colonies: Two Women's Travel Narratives of the 1790s* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999), 3-5; Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 142-44.

<sup>112</sup> Coleman, introduction, 5. Coleman's discussion of the documents' relationship to one another provided the inspiration for this project.

Anderson's time in London "appears to have immediately produced the good effect expected from it" and that the colony "has gone on improving in every respect."<sup>113</sup> Falconbridge did not take such a positive view of events.

Falconbridge believed that the Directors had broken their promises to the Nova Scotians and claimed that "the Directors conduct must really be a subject of consternation wherever it is known."<sup>114</sup> Through analysis of these different perspectives, this paper will demonstrate that the issues of promises and perceptions were immensely important to the outcomes of Perkins and Anderson's trip to London, which consequently has bearings on the study of settler colonialism.

Earlier historical studies that involved the Black loyalists placed them at the forefront of their analyses. James W. St. G. Walker argues that the Black loyalists who came to Freetown from Nova Scotia had a "fundamental concern for freedom and self-determination" and believed that "their treatment by their colonial rulers constituted a betrayal."<sup>115</sup> In her 1976 book *The Loyal Blacks*, Ellen Gibson Wilson explicitly admits that she is "biased in favor of" the Black loyalists and believes they had "*rational* grounds" for their dissent against the

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<sup>113</sup> Sierra Leone Company, *Substance of the Report Delivered by the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, to the General Court of Proprietors, on Thursday the 27th March, 1794* (London, 1794), 18.

<sup>114</sup> Anna Maria Falconbridge, *Two Voyages to Sierra Leone, during the Years 1791-2-3, In a Series of Letters, By Anna Maria Falconbridge. To Which Is Added, a Letter from the Author, to Henry Thornton, Esq. M.P. and Chairman of the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1794), 271-73 (quotation on p. 271).

<sup>115</sup> Walker, *Black Loyalists*, 383.

Sierra Leone Company.<sup>116</sup> Indeed, Wilson claims that the Black loyalists “pushed back the horizons of their liberty measurably.”<sup>117</sup>

More recent studies have furthered these claims about the Black loyalists but have situated the Black loyalists in broader international contexts. Maya Jasanoff places the Black loyalists from Nova Scotia within “a global history of the loyalist diaspora” that followed the American Revolution.<sup>118</sup> Jasanoff argues that, “like the troublesome East Florida refugees in the Bahamas, Freetown’s black loyalist settlers had experienced a double displacement, and internalized a mistrust of British authorities in North America that proved extremely difficult to overcome.”<sup>119</sup> Janet Polasky locates the resistance of the Black loyalists within the broader revolutionary atmosphere of the Atlantic between 1776 and 1804. Within this context, Polasky argues that “black loyalists who revolted in Sierra Leone for self-rule claimed a liberty they had witnessed widely in the Americas but never enjoyed.”<sup>120</sup>

The studies mentioned in the preceding two paragraphs are valuable for illuminating the experiences of the Nova Scotians, but they do not frame Freetown as a settler colony. Viewing Freetown in this way and discerning the issues that mattered in it provides one with an excellent opportunity to nuance the dynamics of settler colonialism. Freetown in the early 1790s can certainly be considered a settler colony because the Black loyalists from Nova Scotia

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<sup>116</sup> Ellen Gibson Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1976), ix-x.

<sup>117</sup> Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, 407.

<sup>118</sup> Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles*, 8.

<sup>119</sup> Jasanoff, 305.

<sup>120</sup> Polasky, *Revolutions without Borders*, 4.

“[moved] to stay.”<sup>121</sup> Moreover, when discussing the similar colony of Liberia, Chris Youé states that “there is little argument that Liberia was a settler colony in the sense that the dominant minority was ‘European’ in taste, manners, and pretensions.”<sup>122</sup> This “European” tendency among settlers was present in early Freetown as well because the Nova Scotians shared the Sierra Leone Company’s desires to Christianize Africa and to replace the slave trade with “legitimate commerce in inanimate commodities.”<sup>123</sup> When reflecting on the omission of a chapter on Sierra Leone from *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism*, Youé asked his readers whether one “should...have been included.”<sup>124</sup> This paper believes that the answer is yes, and it is its aim to provide one.

Ikuko Asaka has done some analysis on the early period of Freetown from a settler colonial perspective, but she situates it within a more international

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<sup>121</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, “Introduction: Settler Colonialism as a Distinct Mode of Domination,” in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism*, ed. Edward Cavanagh and Lorenzo Veracini (London: Routledge, 2017), 4. In Veracini’s full definition, “everyone is a settler if they are part of a collective and sovereign displacement that moves to stay, that moves to establish a permanent homeland by way of displacement.” This definition applies to the long-term history of Nova Scotians in Sierra Leone because they “conquered, enslaved, and ‘civilized’ West African tribes.” This paper is not interested in the long-term history of the Nova Scotians in Sierra Leone, but it will highlight events from the beginning of it. The author thought it necessary to highlight that the events of this paper are part of an overall trajectory of displacement that is typically associated with settler colonial studies. For the second quotation in this footnote, see Khalil Anthony Johnson Jr., review of *Otherwise Worlds: Against Settler Colonialism and Anti-Blackness*, ed. Tiffany Lethabo King, Jenell Navarro, and Andrea Smith, *Native American and Indigenous Studies* 8, no. 2 (Fall 2021): 156.

<sup>122</sup> Chris Youé, “Settler Colonialism or Colonies with Settlers?,” review of *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism*, ed. Edward Cavanagh and Lorenzo Veracini; *Manners Make a Nation: Racial Etiquette in Southern Rhodesia 1910–1963*, by Allison Shutt; and *The Souls of White Folk: White Settlers in Kenya, 1900–1920s*, by Brett Shadle, *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 52, no. 1 (2018): 73.

<sup>123</sup> James Sidbury, “‘African’ Settlers in the Founding of Freetown,” in *Slavery, Abolition and the Transition to Colonialism in Sierra Leone*, ed. Paul E. Lovejoy and Suzanne Schwarz (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2015), 131–32.

<sup>124</sup> Youé, “Settler Colonialism or Colonies with Settlers?,” 73.

context. Asaka ties the early history of Freetown and Sierra Leone to broader settler colonial ideologies “in the United States and British North America” that designated formerly indigenous land as the exclusive domain of white people and consequently sought to remove Black people to “tropical regions” to make enough space for white people to inhabit the land.<sup>125</sup> Specifically, Asaka asserts that the migration of the Nova Scotians to Sierra Leone and the administration of the Sierra Leone Company “precipitated racial explanations of the migrations” in which Sierra Leone’s “tropical climate” made it a “suitable new home for free blacks.”<sup>126</sup> While Asaka works from an international context and places Freetown within it, this paper will center its analysis on Freetown and use the accounts of the events surrounding Perkins and Anderson’s petition to emphasize what mattered in the settler colony of Freetown’s political trajectory and offer suggestions for issues scholars should take seriously when studying settler colonies.

Current efforts to theorize settler colonialism do not provide the nuance that is necessary to understand the case of Freetown. For example, when discussing the possibility for genocide within settler colonialism, Patrick Wolfe argues that “the occasions on or the extent to which settler colonialism conduces to genocide are not a matter of the presence or absence of the formal apparatus of the state.”<sup>127</sup> With this statement, Wolfe implies that settler colonialism as an

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<sup>125</sup> Ikuko Asaka, *Tropical Freedom: Climate, Settler Colonialism, and Black Exclusion in the Age of Emancipation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 5-6.

<sup>126</sup> Asaka, *Tropical Freedom*, 22.

<sup>127</sup> Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 393.

entity can operate without the influence of state structures. To a degree, this assumes that settler colonial enterprises are unified. The case of Freetown proves that such unity does not always exist. There was, in fact, a fundamental breakdown between the settlers and the administrative organization that oversaw them.<sup>128</sup> Settlers worried about their own betrayal, and others shared these worries.

In addition to having implications for settler colonialism, these two accounts of Perkins and Anderson's journey to London in 1793 create new understandings for Freetown's own history during the first decade of its existence. An examination of the Sierra Leone Company's response to the petition in its report reveals that finance was a significant reason that it did not accept Perkins and Anderson's claims as legitimate. The Directors informed the proprietors that they had spent significantly more money on the colony than was necessary.<sup>129</sup> Consequently, they were not inclined to believe Perkins and Anderson's claims that they had been treating the Nova Scotians unfairly.

This issue of finance is not something that scholars have heretofore considered regarding the Company's response to the petition. Pybus primarily ascribes the rejection to the Company's frustration at what they perceived to be the Nova Scotians' irrationality and disobedience.<sup>130</sup> Walker mentions that the

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<sup>128</sup> The Sierra Leone Company was not fully an arm of the state, but it had been incorporated by the House of Commons, which meant that had control of the colony's land and the colony's laws. Thus, when considered in light of Wolfe's formulation, the Sierra Leone Company—as the administrative body of the colony of Freetown—can be considered a governing “apparatus,” even if not fully a state one. Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 144.

<sup>129</sup> Sierra Leone Company, *Report*, 1794, 62.

<sup>130</sup> Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 176-77; Pybus, “Less Favourable Specimen,” 102.

Directors believed the problems brought up in the petition owed to supply shortages in the colony but does not mention the Directors' perception of their financial contributions to the colony.<sup>131</sup> Wilson ascribes rejection of the petition to the Company's "confidence in" William Dawes.<sup>132</sup> Polasky asserts that the Directors believed the Nova Scotians had been "emancipated too suddenly" to have a proper conception of governance and thus to develop valid complaints.<sup>133</sup> All of the reasons that these scholars name are significant, but the Company's conception of its financial involvement in the colony should also be identified as a significant reason for why they responded the way they did.

Furthermore, scholars have not connected Perkins and Anderson's follow-up address to the 1800 rebellion. Cassandra Pybus mentions Perkins and Anderson's threat to not submit to the government's agents in Sierra Leone but only in the context of the events specifically surrounding the petition.<sup>134</sup> Walker and Wilson also acknowledge the rejection of governance inherent in this address, with Walker calling it "more hostile" than the original petition.<sup>135</sup> These scholars' accounts of the later 1800 rebellion—along with other scholarly accounts—do not allude back to this address in the descriptions of the rebellion. Maya Jasanoff labels the 1800 rebellion as "the culmination of a series of conflicts around subjects' rights that had erupted in Freetown since its

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<sup>131</sup> Walker, *Black Loyalists*, 176.

<sup>132</sup> Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, 294.

<sup>133</sup> Polasky, *Revolutions without Borders*, 106. This paper also discusses the Company's mindset toward the Nova Scotians, but the author's interpretations came from the Company's report itself and not from what Polasky says here.

<sup>134</sup> Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 176.

<sup>135</sup> Walker, *Black Loyalists*, 177.

founding.”<sup>136</sup> Jasanoff also identifies Isaac Anderson as one of the 1793 London delegates but does not mention his sentiments in the address.<sup>137</sup> Likewise, Walker states that Isaac Anderson was a “longstanding [opponent] of government policies” but does not give any specifics regarding this opposition.<sup>138</sup>

This address was more significant than historians have previously understood. Isaac Anderson was one of the main leaders of this rebellion. The rebels elected him as governor, and he was hanged after the Company quashed the rebellion.<sup>139</sup> The address, then, should be acknowledged as a significant part of the political trajectory of Freetown in the 1790s. Anderson, who later attempted to overthrow Company government, stated that he would not acquiesce to the construction of the Company’s government as he saw it. In accounts of the rebellion going forward, reference should be made to Anderson’s words in this address because the roots of his intent to rebel can be traced back to this address.<sup>140</sup>

Perkins and Anderson’s trip to London to present the Nova Scotians’ petition in 1793 and the Sierra Leone Company and Falconbridge’s representations of it reveal that the issue of promises influenced how the Nova Scotians framed their petition and their response to its rejection. Also, Perkins and Anderson’s follow-up address should be read as a significant event in the

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<sup>136</sup> Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles*, 305.

<sup>137</sup> Jasanoff, 304.

<sup>138</sup> Walker, *Black Loyalists*, 221.

<sup>139</sup> Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles*, 305; Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 202.

<sup>140</sup> For fuller accounts of the rebellion, see Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles*, 304-05; Polasky, *Revolutions without Borders*, 108-10; Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 197-202; Pybus, “Less Favourable Specimen,” 107-08; Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, 391-97; and Walker, *Black Loyalists*, 232-35.



political trajectory of Freetown and should be referenced when discussing the 1800 rebellion. Finally, the Sierra Leone Company's opinion of their financial contributions to the colony played a significant role in their rejection of the petition.

In addition to the specific history of the colony, these accounts of Perkins and Anderson's time in London reveal important issues that can help to shape events in a settler colony. These issues are promises made to settlers and whether those promises are kept, what observers such as Falconbridge considered to be significant, the motivation of the colony's administrative body when approaching a decision, the administrative body's perceptions of the settlers, and the administrative body's understanding of their level of involvement in the colony. In short, Falconbridge and the Sierra Leone Company's accounts of Perkins and Anderson's trip to London allow historians to change their understanding of Freetown's early history and to enhance their approaches to settler colonial studies.

Falconbridge's section on the Nova Scotians in Letter XIV of her narrative is complicated because many of the first pages of the letter included lengthy quotations that were purportedly Perkins and Anderson's own words. These quotations included an address that she said Perkins and Anderson gave to the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company. At the end of the section where Falconbridge offered her account of Perkins and Anderson's time in London, Falconbridge declared that "the Directors conduct must really be a subject of

consternation wherever it is known.”<sup>141</sup> With her section on Perkins and Anderson’s journey to London, Falconbridge thus sought to solidify a case against the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company that condemned their conduct toward the Nova Scotians.

Unfortunately, readers cannot know for sure how true to Anderson and Perkins the sections that quoted them actually were. After all, Falconbridge had her own personal gripe with the Sierra Leone Company over money that they owed her as Alexander Falconbridge’s widow.<sup>142</sup> It is thus possible—even probable—for Falconbridge to have manipulated the sections where Perkins and Anderson are speaking for her own ends.<sup>143</sup> Therefore, the sections that allegedly recount Perkins and Anderson’s words should be read with an eye to these considerations. That said, the sections still offer a valuable window into the conflict that occurred in the early years of Freetown. Even if Falconbridge was biased, she was biased in favor of the Nova Scotians and wanted to “vindicate” them along with herself.<sup>144</sup> It thus seems likely that she would want to accurately communicate any grievances the Nova Scotians had.

Even if it needs to be read with an eye toward Falconbridge’s underlying motivations, Falconbridge’s letter chronicling Perkins and Anderson’s time in London offers a glimpse of the tension at the heart of colonial dynamics. Perkins and Anderson spoke for settlers who had legitimate fears of betrayal.

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<sup>141</sup> Falconbridge, *Two Voyages*, 271.

<sup>142</sup> Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, 294.

<sup>143</sup> Ellen Gibson Wilson says that “it is probable” that Falconbridge and her husband, Isaac DuBois, helped write Perkins and Anderson’s address to the directors. Wilson, 297.

<sup>144</sup> Coleman, introduction, 7.

Falconbridge's account reveals a breakdown between the governing body of Freetown and its settlers. In settler colonial studies, a full accounting needs to be made of the promises made to settlers and whether these promises were kept. Also, settler colonial studies needs to acknowledge the fact that some settlers feared betrayal and had experienced betrayal before they became settlers in specific places. The analysis that follows in this section will hopefully add that nuance.

In the address that Anderson and Perkins presented to the Court of Directors, the two men quickly got to the point of promises. The men made it clear that they believed the promises Clarkson made to them in Nova Scotia were the promises of the Sierra Leone Company. They then blatantly asked the Directors whether they intended to follow through with these promises. Specifically, they requested grants for the land on which they currently lived.<sup>145</sup> Perkins and Anderson wanted a straight answer about the promises that had been made to them. They had moved across the Atlantic to start new lives and wanted to ensure that the terms on which they had moved would be met.<sup>146</sup> In fact, Perkins and Anderson rooted their worry at the state of these promises in their past experiences. Perkins and Anderson told the Directors that "we have been so often deceived by white people, that we are jealous when they make any promises, and uneasily wait till we see what they will come to."<sup>147</sup> Perkins, Anderson, and the Nova Scotians had a painful history of broken promises that

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<sup>145</sup> Falconbridge, *Two Voyages*, 260.

<sup>146</sup> Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 175.

<sup>147</sup> Falconbridge, 264.

they did not wish to continue experiencing. As a result, they wanted to clearly articulate their request for the promises to be fulfilled. The concerns expressed by Perkins and Anderson exposed a breakdown between the Sierra Leone Company and its settlers. The settlers felt that the Company was making promises it could not keep, and the Directors did not share their opinion on the significance of the matter.<sup>148</sup>

Perkins and Anderson also explicitly told the Directors that there would be consequences for the fact that the Company had not fulfilled its promises up to that point. Perkins and Anderson flatly told the Directors that “we *will not* be governed by your present Agents in Africa” and that they could not “think of submitting [their] grievances” to these agents.<sup>149</sup> Their reasoning for this was simple: they believed that it was “inconsistent to suppose justice will be shewn us, by the men who have injured us.”<sup>150</sup> With this statement, Perkins and Anderson thus demonstrated that the lack of fulfillment of promises by the Company had significant ramifications for the governance of the colony. Because Company employees had not carried out what the settlers believed were the Company’s promises, the settlers expressed an unwillingness to submit to Company rule in its present state. When considering the early history of Freetown, then, the issue of the promises made in Nova Scotia is of considerable importance because it caused seeds of discontentment to be sown that

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<sup>148</sup> Falconbridge, 264. A specific analysis of the Directors’ opinions will take place on pp. 16-24 of this paper.

<sup>149</sup> Falconbridge, 263.

<sup>150</sup> Falconbridge, 263.

expressed themselves in a lack of willingness to submit to governance. Although a full-scale rebellion would not occur until 1800, one can see the seeds for this rebellion being sown in this address in 1793 by a man who would prove to be a key figure in it.<sup>151</sup>

When analyzing the trajectory and the dynamics of settler colonies, one must consider the promises that were made to settlers which prompted them to be settlers and the ways in which those promises were kept and not kept. The status of the promises has significant ramifications not only for events that happen in colonies but also for the attitudes that settlers have toward being settlers. In the case of the Nova Scotians, they developed an antagonistic relationship with their governing body because that body did not keep its promises. Issues of promise can thus be a shaping and complicating factor in settler colonies such as Freetown.

Falconbridge's own analysis of this address and Perkins and Anderson's time in London also considered the broken promises of the Sierra Leone Company to be significant. Falconbridge stated that the "conduct" of the Directors during this ordeal with Perkins and Anderson "must really be a subject of consternation wherever it is known."<sup>152</sup> Falconbridge also claimed that the British government ought to "enforce" the fulfillment of the promises that Clarkson made to the settlers if the Directors did not do it themselves.<sup>153</sup> Falconbridge then made

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<sup>151</sup> The rebellious Nova Scotian settlers elected Anderson as their governor. Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 304.

<sup>152</sup> Falconbridge, *Two Voyages*, 271.

<sup>153</sup> Falconbridge, 272.

a direct appeal to someone whom she did not name but referred to as “that immaculate Member of the House of Commons.”<sup>154</sup> In this appeal, Falconbridge asked her readers if this man’s time “would be better employed...if he exerted himself in getting justice done these poor blacks” than in his present preoccupation of “obstinately persisting to abolish the Slave Trade.”<sup>155</sup> Falconbridge additionally accused this man of playing a role in “destroying” the “happiness and comfort” of the Nova Scotians.<sup>156</sup>

Clearly, Falconbridge thought that these broken promises were a significant issue. She believed that they should define the public perception of the Sierra Leone Company, and she certainly did her part to ensure that this happened. At this point, it is important to remember that Falconbridge was also concerned with personal slights that she believed the Sierra Leone Company had made to her regarding her finances.<sup>157</sup> This opens her interpretation to the possibility of exaggeration because her anger about her personal conflict with the Sierra Leone Company may have caused her to amplify her anger about the Nova Scotian situation. One cannot know this for certain. What is unmistakably clear is that her anger at what she considered to be broken promises came through clearly in her narrative.

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<sup>154</sup> Falconbridge, 272. The author speculates that this was Wilberforce given Wilberforce’s prominent status as an abolitionist in the 1790s. Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 142.

<sup>155</sup> Falconbridge, 273.

<sup>156</sup> Falconbridge, 273.

<sup>157</sup> Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, 294.

Within the settler colonial context of Sierra Leone, this perspective is important to consider because it reveals what an observer of settler colonialism on the ground thought about the process of settler colonial governance. Falconbridge was married to two men who were closely involved with the Sierra Leone Company in some capacity.<sup>158</sup> Given this and the time that she spent in the colony, she saw a lot of things and was able to develop opinions about what happened. Although it was certainly colored by her own biases, Falconbridge's analysis of events in the settler colony of Freetown led her to conclude that the issue of promises made to settlers was of great significance. Scholars who wish to study the early history of Freetown from a settler colonial lens ought to pay attention to Falconbridge's assessment of the significance of broken promises in Sierra Leone. By doing so, they can gain a window into what an early observer of this settler colony deemed to be important. This type of analysis also has implications for the study of settler colonialism more broadly. To gain a comprehensive sense of key issues in the early formation of settler colonies, scholars should pay attention to what early observers thought were significant issues. That way, issues that were significant at the time can inform and strengthen their analysis because they will have a comprehensive understanding not only of events but also of what observers of settler colonies thought of those events.

It is also worth considering that Falconbridge's account enjoyed a wide readership. Her account was "reprinted twice in 1794" and "reissued in a new

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<sup>158</sup> Coleman, introduction, 3, 5.

edition in 1802.”<sup>159</sup> This is another reason why scholars should consider what early observers of settler colonialism thought was important. Falconbridge’s account informed what a lot of people in Great Britain thought about Freetown and the Sierra Leone Company. Although it is impossible to know how many of her readers believed what she said, it still stands that they would have read an account that took the Sierra Leone Company to task for not keeping its promises to the Nova Scotians. Thus, early observers of settler colonialism can also have a public influence back in the metropole. By studying the opinions of these early observers, scholars can get a sense of how opinions of the settler colony were spread in the metropole as well as what those opinions were. Historian Janet Polasky claimed that the “success” of Falconbridge’s account indicated “popular interest in the coast of Africa, colonial exploration, and the antislavery movement.”<sup>160</sup> This validation of popular interest is not the only value that Falconbridge’s account possesses. Her account also contained specific opinions about issues of significance in the settler colony of Freetown that spread widely to the public. Because of this, scholars should consider her opinions as an observer of settler colonialism to be of the utmost importance.

The Sierra Leone Company had a much less sympathetic view of Perkins and Anderson’s journey to London. In an introductory statement about the journey, the Company told the proprietors that “two delegates” had been “chosen by the whole body of Nova Scotians” to go to England to “lay their complaints

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<sup>159</sup> Polasky, *Revolutions without Borders*, 105.

<sup>160</sup> Polasky, 105.



before the Court of Directors.”<sup>161</sup> When assessing the impact of this petition and the journey of Perkins and Anderson to London, the report succinctly claimed that this process “appears to have immediately produced the good effect expected from it.”<sup>162</sup> The report also saw no interruption in the progress of the colony as a result of Perkins and Anderson’s journey.<sup>163</sup>

A few pages later, the Directors gave a more extensive account of these events. In it, the Directors casted doubt on the validity of the petition, claiming that they had reason to believe that it was “not thoroughly approved by a great part of the Nova Scotians.”<sup>164</sup> The Directors also included the text of the resolution they made in response to the petition and presented to Perkins and Anderson. In the resolution, the Directors claimed that the terms of the petition were “hasty, and the facts therein mentioned as chiefly founded on mistake and misinformation.”<sup>165</sup> The Directors also asserted that a lack of supplies in the colony largely caused the complaints of the petition and that the supplies which had recently been sent to the colony would resolve many of the complaints in the petition. Going forward, the Directors encouraged the Nova Scotians to “discourage all unreasonable discontent” and “pay respect and obedience to the government.”<sup>166</sup> If the Nova Scotians did have any further complaints, they were

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<sup>161</sup> Sierra Leone Company, *Report, 1794*, 18.

<sup>162</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 18.

<sup>163</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 18.

<sup>164</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 23.

<sup>165</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 24.

<sup>166</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 24.

to take them up with the “Governor and Council” in the colony, who would then relay the complaints to the Directors.<sup>167</sup>

One can clearly see the contrast here between Falconbridge’s account of Perkins and Anderson’s journey and the Sierra Leone Company’s. Falconbridge included Perkins and Anderson’s own words, and the Sierra Leone Company only offered their own summary of what they considered to be the significant portions of what happened. In fact, the Sierra Leone Company only briefly mentioned Perkins and Anderson’s address to the Court of Directors that Falconbridge had included in full. The Directors called it a “very hasty remonstrance” and accused Anderson and Perkins of displaying “the same kind of vehemence and disrespect to the Court of Directors, which had occasionally been shewn to the government at Sierra Leone.”<sup>168</sup> It is clear that the Company was not interested in including the words of Anderson and Perkins, which would have allowed the proprietors to see for whether or not the words contained “vehemence and disrespect.”<sup>169</sup>

The discord between Falconbridge’s account and the Company’s account reveals the tensions inherent within different parties in the settler colony of Freetown. The Sierra Leone Company had different motivations than the settlers. The settlers wanted to ensure fairness and just treatment for themselves through the fulfillment of the promises that had been made to them. The Sierra Leone Company wanted to ensure that their colony continued to run smoothly and

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<sup>167</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 25.

<sup>168</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 25.

<sup>169</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 25.

according to their initiatives. This can be seen in the Company's attempt to shoehorn the petition into a narrative in which it did not stop the colony from "improving in every respect" and its call for the Nova Scotians to obey the government.<sup>170</sup>

This difference in motivation reveals the importance of considering the motivations of the different parties within a settler colony. The Sierra Leone Company's motivations influenced the way that they handled the situation of the petition and interacted with Perkins and Anderson. Because of their determination to continue apace with their objectives, the Directors were not going to heed the complaints that Anderson and Perkins laid before them. As Cassandra Pybus has argued, these two men "had not a hope in heaven of convincing the directors that injustice was a feature of their great scheme for Africa."<sup>171</sup> Consequently, then, the Directors' lack of desire to listen to the settlers influenced how their decision to largely ignore the settlers, which consequently led to Perkins and Anderson's frustration at being denied and undoubtedly increased their frustration with the Directors.<sup>172</sup> Thus, when attempting to determine the reasons behind the trajectories of events in settler colonies, one needs to analyze the differing motivations that each side had when approaching the conflict.

In addition to expressing displeasure at the petition, the Directors had complaints about the conduct of the Nova Scotians more generally. These

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<sup>170</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 18, 24.

<sup>171</sup> Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 175-6.

<sup>172</sup> Pybus, 176.

complaints were similar in character to the ones that they made against Anderson and Perkins. First, the Directors identified a major defect in the Nova Scotian character as being “the due regulation and command of their tempers,” an area in which they were “eminently found to fail.”<sup>173</sup> The Directors believed that this lack of ability to control their tempers meant that the Nova Scotians “appeared in many instances remarkably rash and hasty in their judgments, and vehement in all the dispositions of their mind.”<sup>174</sup> The Directors thought that this alleged temper problem had caused “the violence which occasionally broke out at an early period of the settlement.”<sup>175</sup>

The Directors identified “unreasonableness” as another character flaw that they believed some of the Nova Scotians had.<sup>176</sup> Specifically, the Directors believed that the “more forward” Nova Scotians had “false and absurd notions...concerning their rights as freemen, and the whole nature of their claims on the Company.”<sup>177</sup> The Directors summarized the essence of Nova Scotian complaints as being that “the Company gain too much money by their dealings with the settlers, and are profiting to an unreasonable degree at their expence.”<sup>178</sup> To disprove this accusation, the Company engaged in a brief discussion of their finances. They told the proprietors that they had spent over eighty thousand pounds in “establishing the colony.”<sup>179</sup> The Directors then stated

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<sup>173</sup> Sierra Leone Company, *Report*, 1794, 59.

<sup>174</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 59.

<sup>175</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 59.

<sup>176</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 60.

<sup>177</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 60.

<sup>178</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 62.

<sup>179</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 62.

that if they had been as stingy as some Nova Scotians had accused them of being and had “merely established a factory for their trade,” they could have spent “a fourth or a fifth part” of what they had spent and saved “about eighty thousand pounds.”<sup>180</sup>

This allusion to their finances represented the Directors’ attempt to disprove the Nova Scotians’ claims about the harsh nature of the Company toward them. According to the Directors, they had spent exceedingly more on the colony than was necessary. Therefore, the Directors believed they had actually displayed a great deal of generosity toward the Nova Scotians. In the Directors’ estimation, this generosity proved “the unreasonableness of those Nova Scotians, who are always complaining of the illiberality of the Company.”<sup>181</sup>

The Directors’ perception of their own generosity further proves why it is important to examine what each side thinks when examining conflict in a settler colony. In addition to considering motivations, one must consider perceptions. When looking at how the Directors viewed the money they had spent, one can glean why they did not take the petition of Anderson and Perkins more seriously. The Directors thought they had gone above and beyond in their expenditures on the Nova Scotians, so they would not have been likely to listen to settlers who claimed they were not being generous enough. This analysis is not an attempt to justify the Sierra Leone Company’s behavior or to side with them. Rather, it is meant to emphasize that it is significant to consider the perceptions that the

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<sup>180</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 62.

<sup>181</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 62.

administrators of a settler colony have of their involvement in the colony when analyzing how they interact with settlers. This certainly impacted the Sierra Leone Company's decision to not allow the petition to influence their policy in Freetown.

Similarly, one must consider the opinions that administrators have of the settlers themselves. Another factor in the Sierra Leone Company's inaction was the fact that they believed the demands were "hasty."<sup>182</sup> This opinion of the petition aligned with their general opinion about the Nova Scotians' failure to control their "tempers," an alleged defect which the Directors believed had led them to be "remarkably rash and hasty in their judgments" on many occasions.<sup>183</sup> The Directors' decision to reject the petition was thus influenced by broader opinions that they had about the Nova Scotians as a whole. Views that administrators possessed about settlers thus played a significant role in how they responded to this particular conflict in this particular settler colony.<sup>184</sup>

In a July 2019 article for the *William and Mary Quarterly*, historian Tiya Miles points out the complications of fitting Black people in the United States into the "settler-native divide."<sup>185</sup> Miles argues that the experiences of African Americans complicate this divide because of the forced migration and oppression

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<sup>182</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 24.

<sup>183</sup> Sierra Leone Company, 59.

<sup>184</sup> Pybus offers a similar analysis of the Sierra Leone Company's estimation of the character of the Nova Scotians. Pybus highlights what the Directors perceive to be irrationality and lack of self-control. That said, the author's choices to emphasize and analyze these opinions came from his reading of the report itself. Also, Pybus does not analyze the Company's perception of the Nova Scotians with an eye toward settler colonialism like the author does. For this discussion, see Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 176-77.

<sup>185</sup> Tiya Miles, "Beyond a Boundary: Black Lives and the Settler-Native Divide," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser, 76, no. 3 (July 2019): 417-26.

that they have experienced. According to Miles, African Americans “had but two choices as the young United States solidified its hold over the central portion of North America: make homes on Indigenous lands or die.”<sup>186</sup> This means that there was a difference between the mindsets behind African American movement onto indigenous land and “European and Euro-American” movement onto indigenous land.<sup>187</sup> While African Americans were motivated by survival, Europeans were motivated by subordination of “the land and peoples of North America.”<sup>188</sup> As a result of African Americans’ complicated position within settler colonialism, Miles calls for the use of new terminology that better accounts for their experiences. Miles believes that this will help historians acknowledge both the “realities” of the African American experience and the questions of “power” that accompany the simultaneous reality that African Americans lived on indigenous lands.<sup>189</sup>

While Miles deals with a different continent and different time period, she nonetheless reveals the difficulties inherent in placing people who have experienced slavery within settler colonial theory. The experiences of the Nova Scotian settlers in Freetown offer a further example of this difficulty. They had been formerly enslaved before moving to Nova Scotia, and troubles with land in Nova Scotia had motivated them to move to Sierra Leone to settle the new

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<sup>186</sup> Miles, “Beyond a Boundary,” 422.

<sup>187</sup> Miles, 422.

<sup>188</sup> Miles, 422.

<sup>189</sup> Miles, 422. One example of a term that Miles proposes is “exiled settler” (426). For a fuller discussion of possible new terminology and its value, see pp. 422-26.

colony at Freetown.<sup>190</sup> This is thus a case that is even more complicated than the scenario Miles presented. While the African Americans in Miles's article were part of an already-existing settler colonial apparatus, the Nova Scotians founded one—albeit in a complicated relationship with the Sierra Leone Company—themselves. What should such a complicated dynamic mean for studies of settler colonialism?

The answer should—like Miles's answer—allow for the same level of complexity that is present on the ground. One should examine the dynamics of power between settlers and those above them, paying attention to the promises made to them and whether those promises were kept. As was seen in the case of Perkins and Anderson—and, by extension, the Nova Scotians—their past experiences with white people had colored their experience in the colony and fomented their frustration with the Sierra Leone Company, a frustration that boiled over in their threat to not accept current Company government. Moreover, one should take seriously the motivations and perceptions of those in power when they interacted with the settlers. The Sierra Leone Company wanted to create a successful colony and did not want to take seriously anything that they believed got in the way of that. The Company also believed that they had been quite generous toward the Nova Scotians, which meant that they were much less likely to accept the petition. Perkins and Anderson's journey to London and the corresponding coverage of it in Falconbridge's travel narrative and the Sierra

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<sup>190</sup> Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 280-84.



Leone Company's 1794 report reveal the complexities of settler colonialism.

Settler colonial theory should be willing to acknowledge and grapple with them.

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