

S. 8. 2. – FISHING INDUSTRIES AND THEIR DEVELOPMENTS

Chair: John Goodlad

(Independent Researcher)

Novel wealth: the riches of North Atlantic fisheries, AD 1500-1700

POUL HOLM (Trinity College Dublin)

Abstract

The role of marine wealth in human history is underappreciated. An illustration of this is the historiography of the early-modern Atlantic which has been dominated by a fascination with the gold and silver obtained by primarily Spanish expansion into Latin America. In contrast, the extent of economic impact of Atlantic marine wealth across time remains patchily understood. However, I show that the value of the North Atlantic cod and North Sea herring landings between 1551 and 1650 roughly equalled the value of gold and silver imported from Latin America. This finding has important implications for our understanding of Atlantic history.

Keywords

Atlantic; fisheries; minerals; economic history

Biography

Poul Holm is Professor of Environmental History, and Chair of the Oceans Past Initiative, OPI, a global network of some 200 associate historians, archaeologists and marine scientists aiming to understand human impact on ocean ecology. Poul's doctoral thesis examined shipping and fishing in southern Scandinavia between 1550 and 1914. He has published on fisheries history and marine environmental history; coastal communities and culture; and Viking settlements in Ireland. He is Chair of the Humanities Class, Academia Europaea.

Paul Friedrich August Wurthmann: A Pioneer of German Steam Deep-Sea Fishing

HEROLD HEIKO (Independent Scholar)

Abstract

On February 7, 1885, Friedrich Busse sent the first German steam trawler fishing in the North Sea from Geestemünde. This date marks the beginning of industrial steam deep-sea fishing in the German Reich. Within a couple of years, steam trawling gained more and more importance. It became one of the major economic sectors in the Lower Weser region before World War I.

Paul Friedrich August Wurthmann ranks among the pioneers of German steam deep-sea fishing, but he is essentially forgotten. He was born in 1837 in Elsfleth, a small town on the shores of the Weser river and an important German commercial shipping harbor in the 19th century. Wurthmann became a sailor and later captain of the Oldenburg merchant navy. In the early 1880s, he started a second career ashore and became CEO of the “Union,” the largest tugboat company on the Weser river. In 1888, he commissioned the 10th and 11th German steam trawler, the converted tugboats “Diana” and “Reform.” At the same time, he founded the influential Steam Trawling Association Lower Weser together with a few other fishing shipowners.

When Wurthmann’s term as CEO of the “Union” ended in the summer of 1893, he founded his own deep-sea fishing company. He was turned towards technological innovation and equipped all his trawlers with the latest available engines and fishing gears. The “Eva” was one the first German trawlers to use a treeless trawl. In 1899, the “August” took part in the German Sea Fishing Association’s expedition to the Bear Island. In 1907, a few years after his death, Wurthmann’s trawlers became the basis of “Norddeutsche Hochseefischerei AG,” one of the large capital companies and a big player in the German fishing business for decades.

The paper aims to show and analyze Wurthmann’s role as pioneer of German steam deep-sea fishing, and his impact on shaping the emerging trawling industry in the late 19th century. It includes research results of my ongoing academic study on Wurthmann’s biography.

Keywords

Fishing, Trawling, Germany

Biography

Dr. Heiko Herold is a historian and publicist specialized in naval and maritime history. He studied Early and Modern History, Economic History and Media Science at Düsseldorf University. Since 2011, he works as Public Affairs Specialist at the U.S. Consulate General Hamburg. He will give his presentation as an independent scholar.