

**S. 13. 1. – SCANDINAVIAN PRIZES IN THE HCA PRIZE PAPERS**

**Discussant: Jelle van Lottum**

(Senior Researcher, Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands, Amsterdam)

**Panel abstract**

Between 1650 and 1810 Danish and Swedish vessels played an important role as European and global carriers. Exploiting wartime opportunities, they often sailed under neutral flag. It was profitable but risky business. About 3,500 Scandinavian vessels were taken prizes by the Royal Navy and British privateers, their papers seized and eventually archived in the HCA Prize Papers collection.

This panel focuses on the Scandinavian Prize Papers in HCA collection. We ask what do the prize cases tell us about Sweden's and Denmark's early modern shipping? We provide examples of how the Prize Papers are employed in studying Scandinavian encounters with global trading and maritime networks. We show how the Prize Papers can be exploited in studying of global knowledge production, communication, and adaptation in Scandinavia.

**Panel participants**

Professor Margaret Hunt, Uppsala University, Professor Pierrick Pourchasse, Université de Bretagne occidentale, Brest, Professor Leos Müller, Stockholm University, Commentator: Dr. Jelle van Lottum, Senior Researcher, Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands, Amsterdam.

# *Times and Tides: Temporality in the Scandinavian Prize Papers*

MARGARET HUNT (Uppsala University)

## **Abstract**

In early modern Europe (circa. 1500-1800) religious conflict, competing systems for computing the length of the year, the growing popularity of practical or applied mathematics, and a strong taste for prediction, both empirical and religious (and occult) all gave rise to new uncertainties about time, and, by extension, space. This was especially pronounced in maritime contexts, where more quantitative techniques for ascertaining time and positioning vied with older, experientially-based and sometimes even magical methods, and did so in contexts where a mistake could have deadly consequences. On top of this, sailors who travelled outside Europe often encountered elaborate but, to them, entirely foreign temporal and chronological systems, not to mention the displacement of traditional "natural" markers for computing both time and positionality, such as stars. This paper aims to chart the diversity of the temporal regimes ordinary sailors lived with, and also to examine how these men sought to use them for their own purposes. The seized papers in the Prize Papers collection contain a significant amount of material bearing on these questions. Printed almanacs, where the tension between solar and lunar calendars was typically a central theme, appear in large numbers, some of them heavily marked up. Sailors have left reams of personal notes on time, tides, the celestial bodies, astrology, etc. and it is also clear that many of them –even lower-level sailors – were trying to teach themselves mathematics. And of course ships logs, which also appear in massive numbers in the seized papers, are centrally about time, place, tides and the weather. Scandinavian sailors are an interesting group to study for two main reasons. First, the Scandinavian countries (especially Sweden) probably had the highest vernacular literacy rate in the world in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Second much of the instruction at every level was home or occupationally based. This means that the Scandinavian Prize Papers, and the humble collections of personal papers they contain, can bring us quite close to the mental structures of ordinary sailors and thereby illustrate the practical implications of polytemporality in a converging and at least partially modernizing world.

## **Keywords**

Temporality. The Great Convergence. Popular literacy and numeracy. The History of Navigation. Early modern oceanic travel.

## **Short Biography**

Margaret Hunt is Professor of History at Uppsala University. She is the author of *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England 1680-1780* (winner of the 1997 Mor-

ris D. Forkosch Prize of the American Historical Association); *Women in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (2010) and (with Philip Stern), *The East India Company at the Height of Mughal Expansion* (2014). She has also written numerous articles and book chapters on gender, sexuality, the Royal Navy, maritime history, the British East India Company, literacy and numeracy, and the history of printing.

## *Patterns of Scandinavian cross trades in HCA Prize Papers in the French Revolutionary Wars*

LEOS MÜLLER (Stockholm University)

### **Abstract**

Scandinavian tonnage did play an important role in carrying trade in the Anglo-French wars of the eighteenth century. Wartime neutrality provided Swedish and Danish carriers with a competitive advantage suitable especially in cross-trades, and the Scandinavian cross-trades rose rapidly. We have a fairly good overall picture of the expansion of Scandinavian shipping based on administration documents, but we lack knowledge of exact patterns of cross trades and the reasoning behind these patterns. The official records (e.g. ship passport documents, muster rolls) provide only vague and often incorrect information about vessels' shipping patterns. Prize papers collection includes a vast amount of interrogatories that can provide details about the seized vessels' shipping patterns. The questions related to visited ports were crucial in the court's decision in legality of seizure. The paper will analyse a representative number of cases of Swedish and Danish vessels taken by the Navy and British privateers in the French Revolutionary Wars, looking at their cross-trade patterns.

### **Keywords**

neutral flags, cross trades, shipping patterns, prize papers, seamen's interrogatories, 1793-1801

### **Short Biography**

Leos Müller is Professor of History and Head of the Centre for Maritime Studies, Stockholm University. He has published widely on Swedish maritime history in the eighteenth century, e.g. Consuls, corsairs, and commerce. The Swedish consular service and long-distance shipping, 1720-1815 (2004) and Sveriges första globala århundrade. En 1700-talshistoria (2018) His most recent research interest concerns the roles of naval warfare, privateering and maritime neutrality.

## *Danish grain for Revolutionary France and British seizures of Danish flag, 1793-1794*

**PIERRICK POURCHASSE** (Univesité de Bretagne occidentale)

### **Abstract**

During the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, France must import grains from Northern Europe because of poor harvests and the disorganization of the country. The British government chose to stop all the traffic destined for the supply of France to starve the enemy. The owners of neutral ships from Denmark or Sweden decided not to apply British rules which were contrary to the rights of neutral navigation in time of war. So many neutral ships loaded with grains were seized during the Revolutionary years. The study of the Prize Papers allows us to measure the scale of the traffic and to study the strategy of the neutrals to turn away the British blockade: falsified documents, incorrect destinations. The British knew these means but could not seize these ships that seemed to be in order without provoking diplomatic incidents. The solution was to buy grain and compensate shipowners.

### **Biography**

Pierrick Pourchasse is Professor of Modern History, Université de Bretagne Occidentale, Brest. His field of research is economic and maritime history (18th-19th centuries), especially long-distance trade, Scandinavian merchant marines and northern Europe in the Age of the French Revolution.