

**S. 8. 1. VESSELS AS ENTITIES**

**Chair: Amândio Barros**

(U.Porto-CITCEM)

## *The last voyages of the brig Novo Abismo: A Portuguese slave ship from the mid-19th century*

**MATTHEW HOPPER** (History Department, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo)

### **Abstract**

The British Royal Navy captured the Portuguese brig Novo Abismo in 1840 off the coast of West Africa as it was preparing to embark African captives to Pernambuco, Brazil. Although there was only one captive aboard at the time of its seizure, the brig was condemned as a slave trader because it was clearly outfitted for the slave trade and contained documentation confirming that it had made multiple slaving voyages between Angola and Pernambuco, including a voyage that successfully delivered 444 slaves only a few months earlier.

At the time of its capture, the Novo Abismo was carrying a massive cache of documents including detailed correspondence about the slave trade between Angola and Brazil. Officials only needed to open a small handful of the hundreds of letters found aboard this ship to prove its guilt, so most of the rest of the correspondence has remained sealed with wax to this day in the records of the High Court of Admiralty in London. Unsealed documents reveal that some of Angola's most infamous slave traders were involved in the last voyages of the Novo Abismo. The correspondence reveals intriguing details about the methods used for procuring enslaved Africans, the specific commodities used in exchange, how slave traders avoided detection of authorities, and the specific marks used in the branding of slaves. Letters also reveal the numbers of slaves purchased on behalf of individual merchants in Brazil and how specific brands were used to track the number of captives who died at sea and remit merchants for lost "property."

This paper draws on previously unused sources from the High Court of Admiralty's "prize papers" to trace the final journeys of the Novo Abismo from Brazil to Africa and illustrate some of the horrifying and personal aspects of the transatlantic slave trade including the methods for the enslavement, branding, and transportation of more than 400 enslaved Africans to Brazil.

### **Keywords**

Slavery, slave trade, Portugal, Angola, Brazil

### **Biography**

Matthew S. Hopper is Professor of History at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. His book, *Slaves of One Master: Globalization and Slavery in Arabia in the Age of Empire* (Yale University Press, 2015), was a finalist for the 2016 Frederick Douglass Book Prize. He received his Ph.D. in History from UCLA (2006), M.A. in African Studies from UCLA (2000) and M.A. in History from Temple University (1998). He was a postdoctoral fellow at the Gilder Lehrman Center at Yale University (2009), a Member at the Institute for Advanced Study,

Princeton (2015), and the Smuts Visiting Research Fellow in Commonwealth Studies at the University of Cambridge (2016). He has held fellowships from the Social Science Research Council and Fulbright-Hays, and his writing has been published in *Annales*, *Itinerario*, and the *Journal of African Development*. He is currently writing a history of liberated Africans in the Indian Ocean world.

## *What's in a name? English ship names from the late thirteenth to the mid-nineteenth century*

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**CRAIG LAMBERT** (Humanities, University of Southampton)

**AIDAN KANE** (JE Cairnes School of Business and Economics, NUI Galway)

### **Abstract**

Other than persons, pets and places, ships and boats are among the few things to which humans have long assigned names in order to distinguish one exemplar from another. In this paper we analyze the names of almost 200,000 merchant ships that operated in England from the late thirteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. Our maintained hypotheses are that these names will reflect the attitudes and aspirations of the owners who named them and that these owners are representative of the well-to-do citizens of English port towns. The ship names trace out a number of social and cultural trends. They show the rise from the late thirteenth century in the use of names with religious associations and their subsequent decline from the sixteenth century. The seventeenth century saw a rise in names drawn from nature and in the eighteenth century names drawn from classical history and mythology became more common. Throughout the centuries most ships were named after persons, but the nature of these personal names changed in several ways. Male forenames were more common in the middle ages, but by the eighteenth century female forenames predominated. From the sixteenth century diminutives were more widely used, indicating greater informality in family relationships and they were often conjoined, as in Betsy & Peggy. From the eighteenth century naming after identifiable individuals became more common, perhaps reflecting the social aspirations of their owners.

### **Keywords**

ship names, England, shipowners, saints

Peter Solar (CEREC, Université Saint-Louis and Faculty of History, University of Oxford)

### **Biographies**

**Peter M. Solar**, now retired from teaching, has published on a range of topics in the economic history of Britain and Ireland during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. His work on maritime history includes papers on Irish shipping in the nineteenth century, the East India and slave trades, tonnage measurement and safety at sea.

**Craig Lambert** is an Associate Professor in Maritime History at the University of Southampton. He has published widely on naval logistics during the Hundred Years War and on maritime communities, c.1300-c.1600. He recently brought to completion a project funded by the

Arts and Humanities Research Council which produced a searchable database of medieval and Tudor ships: [www.medievalandtudorships.org](http://www.medievalandtudorships.org)

**Aidan Kane** is a lecturer in economics at NUI Galway. He has specialized in the construction of long-run databases for Irish economic history, especially for 18th public finances, trade, and exchange rate data.

# *Shipping Productivity and the Eighteenth-Century British Slave Trade*

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## **Abstract**

This paper uses data from the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database ([www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org)), supported by contextual material, to examine shipping productivity in the eighteenth-century British slave trade. Between 1700 and 1807, British ships took over 3 million enslaved Africans from seven regions of west Africa for sale in transatlantic markets - a greater number than any other nation. The eighteenth century was also the era when Liverpool became the leading British slave trading port (measured by the number of ships in the trade and the number of Africans shipped). The hypothesis behind the paper is that the economic performance of the British slave trade was characterised by efficiency gains as merchants, captains and crew became familiar over time with handling vessels in a highly risky, complex and commercially important branch of British overseas trade and shipping. In the paper, shipping productivity will be measured in four ways, both in relation to the British slave trade as a whole and to the three leading slave trading ports – London, Bristol and Liverpool. First, calculations will be made about the total length of voyages over time to determine whether efficiency gains were made in relation to reducing the time, and therefore the costs, of voyages. Second, a similar exercise will be undertaken for turn-around times at the three nodes of the triangular trade in Britain, west Africa and the Americas. Third, the number of slaves loaded in west Africa in relation to ships' tonnages will be examined to explore whether vessels were loaded to capacity. Fourth, estimates of slaves loaded in west Africa and delivered in the Americas will be analysed to determine whether efficiency gains were made over time in reducing mortality on the Middle Passage. The paper will examine whether productivity trends varied according to slave supply areas. The paper will provide conclusions on productivity trends in the shipping of the eighteenth-century British slave trade.

## **Keywords**

Britain, shipping, productivity, slave trade

## **Biography**

**Professor Kenneth Morgan** is Professor of History in the Division of Politics and History at Brunel University London, and a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. He holds a DPhil in Modern History from the University of Oxford. He has published widely on eighteenth-century British shipping and trade and on broader aspects of maritime history. His books include *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (CUP, 1993), *Slavery, Atlantic Trade*

and the British Economy, 1660-1800 (CUP, 2000), Slavery and the British Empire: From Africa to America (OUP, 2007), A Short History of Transatlantic Slavery (I. B. Tauris, 2016), and Matthew Flinders, Maritime Explorer of Australia (Bloomsbury, 2016).

**Dr Martin Ejnar Hansen** is Senior Lecturer in the Division of Politics and History at Brunel University London. He holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Aarhus, Denmark. He has a broad research focus, and in recent years has published research articles on historical topics such as the Weimar Republic, the Danish Constituent Assembly, and museum visits in Britain, all using quantitative research methods and databases.