

How to research Scandinavian ships and seamen in the Prize Papers of the British National Archives

Margaret R. Hunt




UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

2023

DOI: 10.33063/diva-503969

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 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5917-3390>

Thanks to: Amanda Bevan, Leos Müller (who taught me most of what I know about Scandinavian shipping), Steve Murdoch, Gustav Ängeby, Ale Pålsson, Victor Wilson, Simon Berggren, Henrik Ågren, Jeppe Mulich, Randolph Cock, Dagmar Freist, Renaud Morieux, Stefan Eklöf Amirell, Maria Ågren, Annika Raapke, Lucas Haasis, the German-UK Prize Papers Project, Anna Knutsson, Adam Jon Kronegh, Christer Lagvik, the Department of History of Uppsala University, and the anonymous authors of the National Archives information sheet, *How to look for records of...High Court of Admiralty*. All errors are my own.

Our research in the Prize Papers and the writing of this guide were supported by a 2018–2022 grant from the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet). Our project was entitled: *In pursuit of global knowledge: Scandinavian ocean travelers 1650–1810*, Principal investigators: Margaret R. Hunt and Leos Müller. Diarienummer: 2018-01167.



<http://www.prizepapers.se>

Cover image: Unopened correspondence and knitted goods seized in 1807 from the Danish ship *Anna Maria*, captured shortly after it departed the Faro Islands en route to Copenhagen. HCA 32/952/301, Master: J.S. Foxmer (1807).

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1. Introduction

The Prize Papers of the National Archives at Kew (TNA) are a large collection of court and other documents arising from the seizure of foreign ships by the English (later British) Navy and privateers in wartime. The bulk of the collection dates from roughly 1650 to 1815, and it contains the records of at least 30 000 ships. Prize-taking was a world-wide phenomenon, especially by the later eighteenth century, and the ships taken represent many nations and political entities. This makes the Prize Papers an unusually rich source for the study of early modern shipping, maritime history and both Europe-centered and more global trade. The records are archived in some 5 500 boxes and bound volumes.

This research guide surveys the Scandinavian material in the Prize Papers, assesses its significance, especially for historians, and offers guidance on how best to access the materials, which are only partially cataloged.

Until 1856 the seizure of merchant ships and cargo owned by enemy nationals was a standard feature of European naval warfare. A ship seized in this way was called ‘a prize.’ During the early modern period, and into the nineteenth century, thousands of ships from the Nordic kingdoms were taken prize by Royal Navy ships or by privateers (*kaper or kapare*). There were a few periods in which Britain was formally at war with a Scandinavian kingdom --generally Denmark-- but for the most part, the seized ships were neutral traders, not ships belonging to persons from an enemy nation. Privateers or Royal Navy ships took Swedish or Danish-Norwegian ships prize because they believed them to be violating the somewhat ill-defined rules of neutrality. Typical charges were: supplying ‘contraband of war’ (arms and ammunition, naval stores and the like) to the enemy; carrying cargo belonging to an enemy national; or flying Swedish or Danish colours (flags) as cover to conceal the fact that the ship was actually from an enemy nation.

Underhanded dealings were by no means confined to the ships being seized. The captains and crews of capturing ships (both Navy and privateers) stood to get a large cut of the profits of any prize condemned by the prize courts, so they were highly motivated to fabricate evidence, suborn crewmembers of the captured ship, and lie in their own witness statements. It was also common to demand bribes in return for letting a particular ship continue on its way. Privateers were also known to prey upon ships in peacetime, and though the authorities tried to stop this, the oceans were a hard space to police. It was sometimes difficult to distinguish privateering from piracy.

Once a ship had been seized and brought into port, its fate would be decided in **the High Court of Admiralty prize court in London**, or one of the **vice-admiralty**

courts, located in British settlements, colonies, or captured places in the Mediterranean, North America, the Caribbean, Africa, the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific.

If the court decided that the ship or its cargo was a legitimate prize, one or both would be appraised and sold, and the proceeds of that sale would be divided between the crew, the owners of the capturing ship (if it was a privateer, as opposed to a Royal Navy ship), and the British crown.¹ There was also a **High Court of Appeal for Prizes** resorted to by both sides.



Image 1. A heavily armed British cutter brig (to the right, with guns blazing) is depicted in the act of taking two Swedish merchant vessels as prizes. This image memorializes a real event. The Swedish ships were the snow *Resolution* (Master: Restenius) and the snow *L'Apparance* (Master: Hedenqwis). These two ships do not appear in the National Archives catalogue, but the latitude and longitude coordinates offered at the bottom of the picture would put the encounter a few days' sail west of the Strait of Gibraltar. Most likely, then, the two ships were taken to the Vice-admiralty Court at Gibraltar, for which few records are extant. The painting is signed W. A:F:Dol. Sjöhistoriska Museet, Stockholm (1793)

¹ Scandinavian ships were also seized in large numbers by the Scots (see below p. 49).

The captured ship and its cargo could also be adjudged *not* to be legal prize if its captain and crew, its owners, or other interested parties could satisfy the court that it really was a neutral ship, owned by bona fide subjects of Sweden or Denmark-Norway or one of the other neutral powers, and only carrying goods owned by persons *not* from a nation with which the British Isles were at war. If the ship met those tests (and several others) the ship or cargo or both would be ‘restored’ to their original owners and the vessel that captured it became liable for court costs and damages, including monetary compensation for cargo that had been sold to prevent deterioration while a case was pending.

This was what happened when a British man of war tried to seize cargo from the Swedish East India Company ship *Götheborg* (*Gothenburg*) during her second trip to China. In the spring of 1741, four years before the *Götheborg* sank, she was intercepted seven days out from the port of Cadiz and forced to divert to the island of Madeira. There she was unceremoniously searched, and 30 000 pieces of eight (Spanish silver) and six butts of sherry sack were confiscated on the grounds that they belonged to subjects of the King of Spain (Great Britain and Spain were then at war, the so-called War of Jenkins’ Ear). A passenger was also detained on suspicion of being a Spanish spy. After protests the *Götheborg* was allowed to proceed on her voyage to Canton, but the British held on to the contested goods and the alleged spy. Things did not turn out well for the capturing ship, however. The owners of the goods were able to prove to the Admiralty judges that they were French and not Spanish, and the ‘spy’ turned out to be Swiss. Accordingly, the goods were restored to their owners and the captors were assessed costs and damages.²

² See TNA [hereafter assumed for all HCA references] HCA 32/114/9 for the original case; HCA 13/89 for examinations, and HCA 42/35/3 for the appeal.



Image 2. Götheborg II (Sweden) a modern replica of the original ship. Photograph courtesy of Stichting Sail Amsterdam www.sail.nl.

Neutrality was supposed to allow ships from the kingdoms of Sweden and Denmark–Norway as well as these kingdoms’ outlying and overseas territories and colonies, to trade with both sides in any war. It formed a key part of the Nordic countries’ economic policy throughout most of the early modern period and beyond.³ This meant that there was an unusual amount of high-level diplomatic involvement in particular prize cases. Swedish or Danish consuls in various ports, the Governors of Swedish and Danish islands in the Caribbean, the Swedish and Danish ambassadors in London, the English ambassador in Sweden, and even Swedish or Danish monarchs, rather frequently intervened to argue that a particular ship or fleet of ships should not be condemned as prize, or to lodge protests if they had been. These kinds of interventions have left numerous traces in British State Papers, in personal recollections of the period, and in Swedish and

³ Ole Feldbaek, ‘Eighteenth-Century Danish Neutrality: Its Diplomacy, Economics and Law’, *Scandinavian Journal of History* 8, no. 1–4 (1983): 3–21; Leos Müller, ‘Sweden’s Neutral Trade under Gustav III: The Ideal of Commercial Independence under the Predicament of Political Isolation’, in *Trade and War. The Neutrality of Commerce in the Inter-State System: The Neutrality of Commerce in the Inter-State System*, ed. Koen Stapelbroek (Helsinki: Collegium for Advanced Studies, 2011), 143–60. Steve Murdoch and Leos Müller: ‘Neutral före neutraliteten. Svensk sjöfart i krigens skugga ca 1650–1800’ in *Angöringar. Berättelser och kunskap från havet*, ed. Simon Ekström and Leos Müller (Göteborg/Stockholm: Makadam, 2017), 185–206.

Danish collections such as the *Diplomatica Anglica* (SE), *Kommerskollegiet* (SE) and *Kommercekollegiet* (DK). Copies of diplomatic correspondence about particular ships are also sometimes filed within individual case bundles in the main HCA series.

Prize disputes and debates about neutrality also featured in printed pamphlets and books, as well as newspapers. Bulstrode Whitelocke had been Oliver Cromwell's ambassador to Sweden during the last two years of the reign of Queen Christina. During that time Whitelocke negotiated, in Uppsala Castle, the first Anglo-Swedish treaty of amity, and as a result he was unusually well-informed about Prize law and neutrality, as well as Sweden's position on the latter. Below is Whitelocke's description of some later negotiations (in England this time) between the Council of State of the Cromwellian Protectorate and the Swedish ambassador to England about the definition of 'contraband of war.' It pertained to the Anglo-Spanish War (1654-1660).

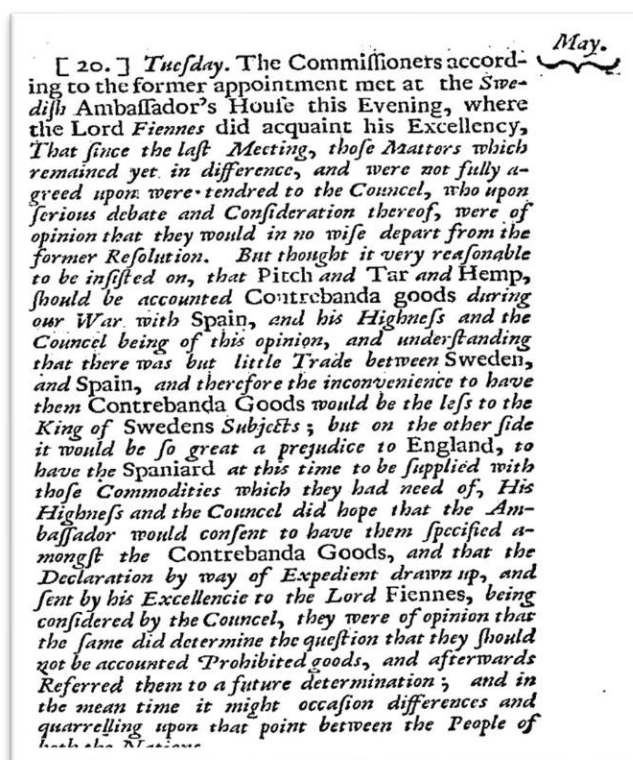


Image 3. Carrying contraband of war made a ship a legal prize, but the definition of contraband of war was not stable. Pitch, tar and hemp were among Sweden's major exports both in wartime and peacetime, and consequently the Swedish ambassador wanted them excluded from the category 'contraband of war.' The English wanted pitch, tar and hemp to be included, because of a worry that these essential naval stores would make their way to Spain and be used to strengthen the Spanish navy.

Bulstrode Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English Affairs...* London, 1682, p. 636

2. Number of ships seized from the Nordic kingdoms

At present there is no certain way to find a record in the National Archives for every ship seized by the British in the period after 1650, especially if the ship was seized in distant waters. Even if case papers do survive somewhere in the vast HCA collection, **Discovery** (the online catalog) often does not tell us from which country the ship comes. For much of this period many people felt more identification with their hometown than with a country, and the clerks and secretaries taking down

statements were often working through an interpreter. Moreover, ships sometimes carried false colours, the captain or crew members lied about the ship's nationality, or there were papers on the ship suggesting or claiming two (or more) nationalities. Nationality, in short, is a loose construct in the Prize Papers. It is a somewhat firmer construct in the Scandinavian records. Thus, the *Diplomatica Anglica* at the Swedish National Archives, Stockholm, contains various lists of Swedish ships taken by the English, and for some wars these counts contain more ships than are reflected in the National Archives records.⁴ However, our interest here is the sources that survive in the British National Archives; therefore, I have used them and not diplomatic sources or contemporary lists of prizes generated by the Danish or Swedish authorities as the basis for this count.

With respect to the National Archives records, some types of records and time periods are especially likely to generate undercounts. These include:

- a) Cases that were *not* tried initially in London but in vice-admiralty courts in the Caribbean, North America, the Mediterranean, West and South Africa and various sites in the Indian Ocean and South Pacific. That is because many of those case records have not survived, or at least have not yet been located or cataloged online.
- b) The period 1650 to 1714 (comprising the first three Anglo-Dutch Wars, the Nine Years War, and the War of Spanish Succession), because the records are currently in the process of being rearranged and catalogued. Moreover, the survival rate of papers for the first three Anglo-Dutch Wars appears low.
- c) The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1793–1815). In the case of Danish-Norwegian ships, there was a special 'Danish Prize Commission' charged with handling claims and other issues related to Danish ships.⁵ This means that the count of Danish ships, at least from about 1801, is likely to be relatively accurate. But the same was not systematically done for Swedish ships. Still, ships that are almost certainly Scandinavian (and probably

⁴ Thus, for the American Revolutionary War and the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War, Leos Müller counts 74 ships listed as British prizes in Riksarkivet, *Diplomatica Anglica* while there are records in the National Archives for 60 Swedish ships. Leos Müller, 'Swedish Vessels in the Prize Papers: Cases from the American Revolutionary War, 1776–1783' in *Facing the Sea: Essays in Swedish Maritime Studies*, ed. Simon Ekström and Leos Müller (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2021), 103–26, here p. 122.

⁵ The Papers of the Danish Prize Commission, including a good deal of correspondence, are in HCA 2/286–293 with additional material in T 84 (Treasury). Duplicates of many of the records are in Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen (Danish Commissioners' Office, London, Arkivnummer 2–0373). There is also a schedule of seized ships 1807–1815 in Kommercekollegiet Handels- og Konsulatsfagets Sekretariat, VA XXII.

Swedish) show up frequently in the records for this period, with names like *Hoppet* or *Neutralitet* and masters who have recognizably Scandinavian names, though it is also true that the court clerks sometimes translated ship-names into their English equivalents. It would be necessary to check each individual case to ascertain these ships' nationality, and that has not been possible due to time-constraints.

1650 to 1788

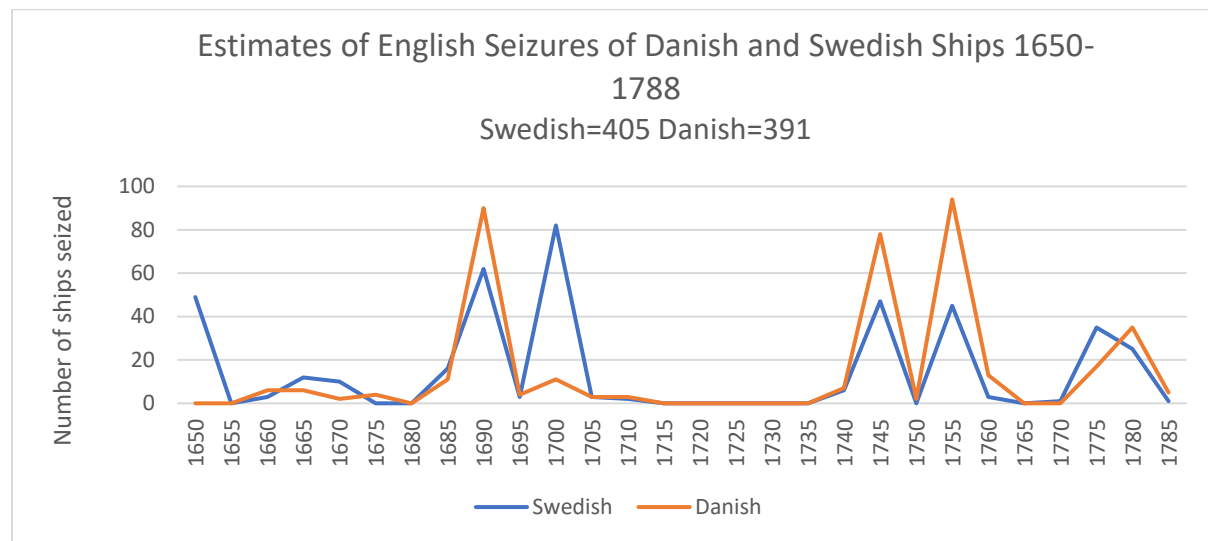
The prize courts only convened when Britain was at war. Between 1650 and 1788 those wars were as follows. Except where noted the two Scandinavian kingdoms were neutral.

- First Anglo-Dutch War (1652-1654)
- Anglo-Spanish War (1654-1660)
- Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-1667) (*Denmark allied with the Netherlands against England*)
- Third Anglo-Dutch War (1672-1674)
- Nine Years' War (or War of the Grand Alliance) (1688-1697)
- War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714)
- War of the Quadruple Alliance (1718-1720)
- War of Jenkins' Ear (1739-1748)
- War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748) (*Sweden allied with Britain*)
- Seven Years' War (1756-1763) (1757-1762 (*Sweden allied with France against Prussia and Britain*)).
- American War of Independence (1776-1782)
- Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780-1784)

Figure 1 represents an attempt to count the Scandinavian ships seized during the period, computed at five-year intervals. The dataset consists of ships with records at the National Archives with one exception. Some of the seventeenth-century figures are based on other sources because the majority of the records had not been catalogued when this enumeration was done. Swedish losses peaked at around 50 during the first Anglo-Dutch war and rose still higher during the Nine Years' War and the War of the Spanish Succession. Scottish privateers were very active in the North Atlantic, especially during the Second Anglo-Dutch war when at least half the seizures of Swedish (and presumably Danish) ships were at the hands of the Scots. *The Scottish cases are not included in the figures however*, since those cases were adjudicated in the Scottish courts (see below p. 54). It is important to note that a good many of these seizures were disallowed on account of Denmark's or Sweden's neutral status during these wars (with the exception of Denmark in the Second Anglo-Dutch War) and the ships and goods were returned to their owners.

Sometimes the captors were also assessed damages. During the Nine Years War, for example, around two-thirds of Danish ships were restored.⁶ Swedish losses rose again during the wars of the mid-1700s, but Danish losses rose much higher, to almost double those of Sweden, probably due to Denmark–Norway’s larger merchant marine and greater tendency to venture beyond the Baltic. Seizures during the American War of Independence, which largely coinciding with the Fourth Anglo–Dutch war, are hard to enumerate (and this is likely an undercount) because, as indicated above, many of the records do not specify the seized ship’s nationality and many ships would have been judged in the vice-admiralty courts.

Figure 1. 1650–1788



1789 to 1815

During this roughly twenty-five-year period Britain was almost constantly at war or on the verge of war with France, or with France’s shifting array of allies and proxies. The Nordic kingdoms were often caught in the crossfire, though they also had their own regional concerns (e.g., the fate of Swedish Pomerania, Finland and Norway). Here is a partial list of the often concurrent wars to which Britain was a party during these years. Scandinavian neutrality held during the wars of the First and Second Coalition, but was difficult to sustain after 1801 (in the case of Denmark) and 1807 (in the case of Sweden).

⁶ I am grateful to Steve Murdoch for information and statistics for both Scottish and English seizures. See also Steve Murdoch, *The Terror of the Seas? Scottish Maritime Warfare, 1513–1713* (Boston, Brill, 2010) and Steve Murdoch, ‘Breaching Neutrality’: English Prize-Taking and Swedish Neutrality in the First Anglo–Dutch War, 1651–1654’, *The Mariner’s Mirror* 105, no. 2 (2019): 134–47.

The French Revolutionary Wars (1793–1802)

- War of the First Coalition (1792–1797)
- War of the Second Coalition (1798–1802)

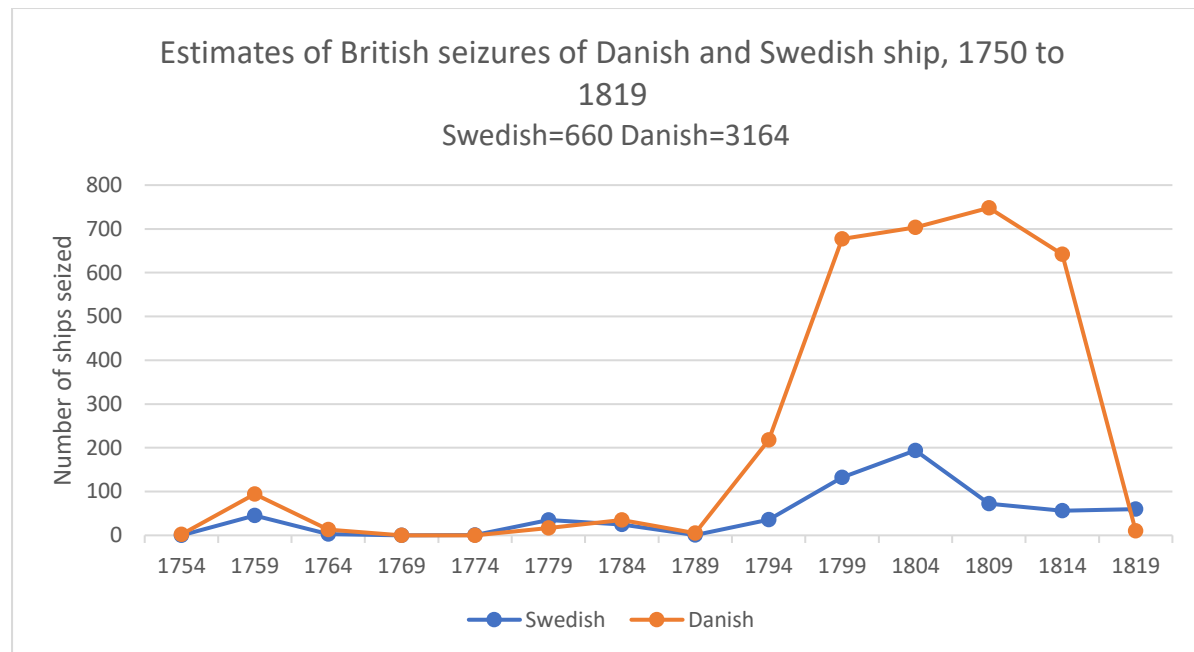
Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815)

- British–Danish Wars (Englandskrigene) (1807–1814) (*Britain at war with Denmark; Denmark allied with France*)
- Anglo–Russian War (1807–1812)
- Dano–Swedish War (Dansk-svenska kriget) (1808–1809) (*Sweden allied with Britain against Denmark*)
- Anglo–Swedish War (Kriget mot Storbritannien) (1810–1812) (*Sweden allied with France and at war with Britain, but for the most part a war on paper only*)
- Finnish War (Finska kriget) (1808–1809) (*Sweden allied with Britain against Russia and Denmark*)
- Peninsular War (Spain and Portugal) (1808–1814)
- War of 1812 (with the United States) (1812–1815)

Most of these conflicts had a global reach, with ships and territory being seized in the Baltic and the Sound, the North Sea, the Channel, the Atlantic, the Caribbean, the African Coast, the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific. The wars redrew the map of Europe and of a good many areas outside Europe as well. Initially, Sweden and Denmark–Norway tried to maintain their neutrality. In 1800 they formed the Second League of Armed Neutrality together with Russia and Prussia, but Britain perceived this as a challenge and went on the offensive. Both Denmark–Norway and Sweden would suffer significant losses in the next decade and a half, but Denmark–Norway’s losses were far greater. The British, deeply invested in the sea-blockade of France, ambivalent toward neutral shipping, and hostile to rivals for trade, attacked Denmark first in 1801 (the First Battle of Copenhagen) and then again in 1807 (the Second Battle of Copenhagen and the ensuing Gunboat War). In the course of what is referred to in Denmark as ‘Englandskrigene’, Britain attacked Danish ships and occupied Danish territory worldwide. The losses to Denmark–Norway’s shipping and trade can be clearly seen on Figure 2. Seizures of Danish ships by the British rose exponentially in 1789–1814 compared to their previous peak during the Seven Years War (and this graph probably understates them, due to the underrepresentation of colonial vice-Admiralty cases in the National Archives at Kew). Note that the y-axis of Figure 2 is on a different scale than that of Figure 1, the better to reflect this change. The Danish–Norwegian merchant marine was the fourth largest in the world before the

outbreak of the French Revolutionary Wars.⁷ The British war on Denmark represented one of the most systematic attempts of the early modern period to destroy a single country's shipping capacity globally using a combination of brute naval power and the law of prize.

Figure 2.



3. Types of sources found in the Prize Papers

Court papers

The focus in this section is on papers in the series **HCA 32** and **HCA 30**, the two largest classes of HCA records (for more information on these two series see p. 48). The court processes themselves generated a very large number of sources. In the online catalogue these are usually referred to as **Court papers** (sometimes abbreviated C.P.) Probably the most valuable of these from the historian's perspective are the *examinations* (interrogations of crew-members) which survive for most seized ships and are generally found in the **HCA 32** series, with some examinations in **HCA 13**. The master or captain (skipper) of the ship was almost always questioned, along with a couple of members of the crew. If there were passengers, one or more might also be questioned. These examinations were

⁷ Romano Ruggiero, 'Per una Valutazione della Flotta Mercantile Europea alla Fine del Secolo XVIII' in *Studi in Onore di Amintore Fanfani*, vol. 5 - En moderno e contemporaneo (Milano: A. Giuffrè, 1962), 575-91.

conducted very soon after the ship had been captured and they were often done through an interpreter – though, given the informal setting (aboard the ship that had made the capture, in local pubs, etc.), this must sometimes have been done on the fly. Sadly, only the English translations have survived. Researchers with experience working in the Prize Papers often try to find and read (and ideally photograph) the examinations first. That is because they contain a lot of basic information about the ship, the crew, the cargo, the shipowners, and the ship's ports of call that can serve to contextualize the other documents in a file.

In effect the examinations make it possible to construct a small narrative of the life of each seized ship as well as partially to reconstruct the lives and careers of its crew. This is made easier because the questions were very standardized. Indeed, printed or manuscript lists of the questions to be asked (called *standing interrogatories*) survive in large numbers in the Prize Papers. Because the questioning was so consistent, a good deal of the evidence is quantifiable, which makes it useful for research in historical demography, labour history and economic history.⁸

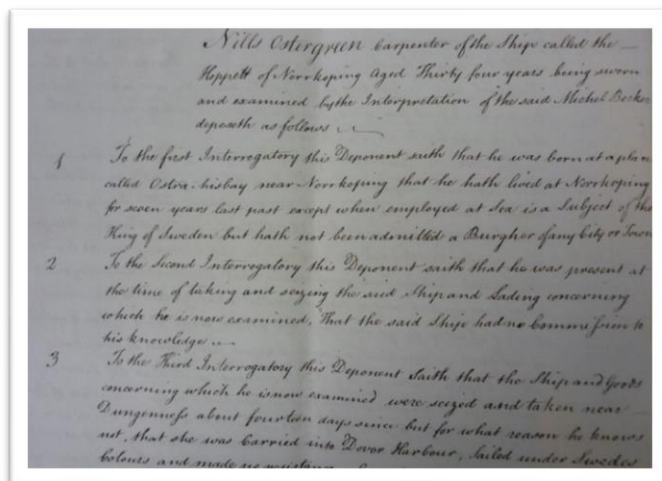


Image 4. Examination of Nills Ostergreen, a 34-year-old ship's carpenter, done through an interpreter. He reports that he was born in Östra Husby and that 'he hath lived at Norrköping for seven years last past except when employed at sea [and] he is a subject of the King of Sweden.' HCA 32/359/8, Ship: Hoppet of Norrköping (Swedish), Master: Haquin Tidestrom (1778)

⁸ See Jelle van Lottum and Bo Poulsen, 'Estimating Levels of Numeracy and Literacy in the Maritime Sector of the North Atlantic in the Late Eighteenth Century', *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 59, no. 1 (2011): 67–82; and Jelle van Lottum and Jan Luiten van Zanden, 'Labour Productivity and Human Capital in the European Maritime Sector of the Eighteenth Century', *Explorations in Economic History* 53 (2014): 83–100.

Claims and counter-claims often give further details about the ship, its cargo, the capture process and social relations on board. These are frequently also filed in HCA 32, or in the appeals case files (HCA 42 and 45). The ‘decree of appraisement and sale of the two slaves [of the ship *Christianus Septimus*] reproduced below is a good example of how a claim worked. This was a case originally heard at the Vice Admiralty court of the Cape of Good Hope (in modern-day South Africa) and later appealed. Enslaved persons found on prizes were usually put up for public auction, and sometimes free crew-members of captured ships who happened to be black or brown were also auctioned off as if they were cargo. In this case the ‘decree of appraisement and sale’ produced a flurry of claims and counter-claims on behalf of the two alleged ‘slaves’, a man named Dutang and a woman named Amina (no family names are given), both originally from the island of Java in Southeast Asia. Dutang and Amina waged a concerted campaign to prove they had previously been manumitted (freed). They showed their manumission papers, they appeared in person before the authorities to plead their case, and they convinced their former owner (Soningson, the ship’s master) to testify on their behalf. The authorities also checked the ship’s roll of the *Christianus Septimus* to see if Dutang was a paid member of the crew (he was, at 16 rupees per month). In the end the court stopped the sale and declared that ‘the two persons Dutang and Amina...were according to the laws of this Colony [that is, the Cape Colony] free people and not liable to sold as slaves.’

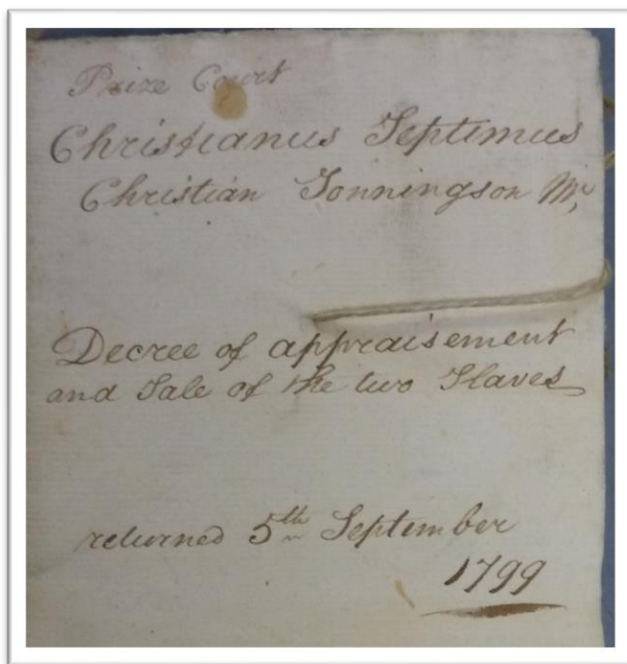


Image 5. This is the original decree ordering that Dutang and Amina be sold at public auction as ‘prize goods.’ It is striking how much evidence the pair had to present to hold onto their freedom. People of color were in a very vulnerable position if the ship they were on was seized, especially if they had no papers and no one to vouch for them. HCA 49/27 Ship: *Christianus Septimus* (Danish), Master: Christian Soningson (1799)

Ships' Papers

As a routine part of the process, papers were confiscated from the prize ship to be used as evidence in the ensuing court process. These are referred to in the online catalog as **Ships' papers** (sometimes abbreviated S.P.). They include a large number of ship logs, bills of lading, muster rolls, minutes of on-board consultations, sea passes, quarantine certificates, charterparties, attestations as to the nationality of captains or ships, and the like. They offer a detailed picture of what it meant to ply the oceans in the early modern period. In many cases, these papers survive in the original HCA 32 series; in other cases the originals are gone – often because they were restored on a judgment of neutrality-- but translations or English abstracts survive in the court papers.

Here are some examples of the kinds of papers found in ships' papers.

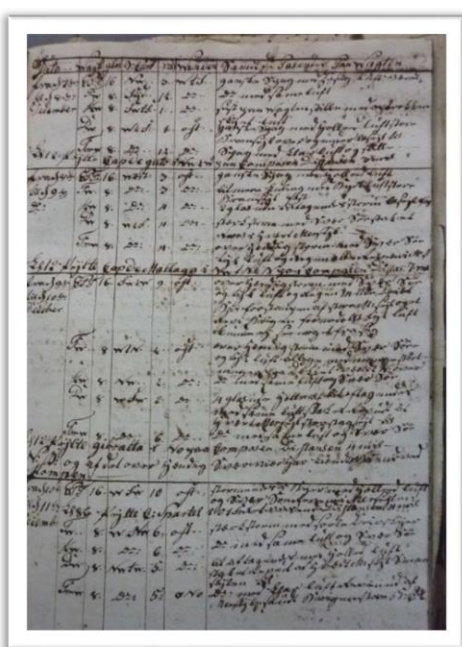


Image 6. Ship's log for the ship *Anna Maria* on a voyage to Corunna in Northern Spain. HCA 32/508/136 (Danish), Master: Esper Hillebrandt (1798)



Image 7. Printed receipt for payment of tax for the Dungeness Lighthouse with engraving. HCA 30/649/9, Ship: St. Peter of Svinsondt [Svinesund] (Danish/Norwegian) Master: Gabriel Petersen Brown (1666)

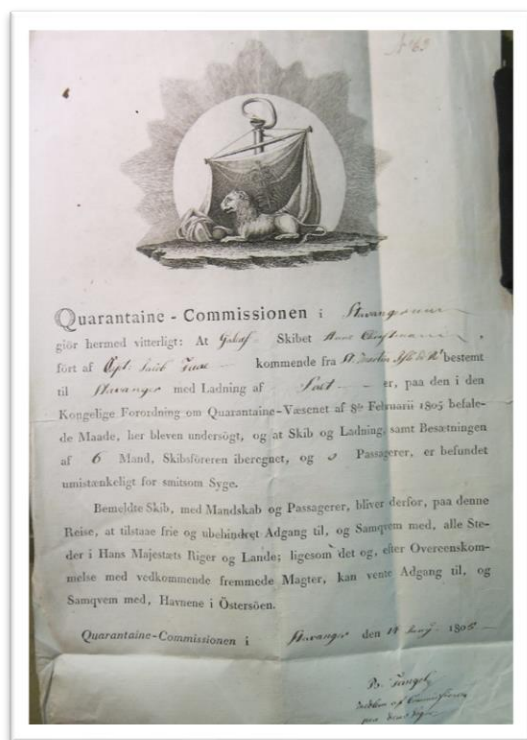


Image 8. A Quarantine certificate. Epidemic disease was a serious problem, especially during wartime, and ships' crews were often suspected of spreading disease from port to port. This is a certificate from the Stavanger Quarantine Commission attesting to the fact that this ship's six crew-members were 'befundet umistænkeligt for smitsom Syge' (not suspected of having a contagious disease) and could therefore freely ply the seas, including the Baltic, with their cargo of French salt. HCA 32/1357/213 Ship: Anna Christina (Danish/Norwegian), Master: Jacob Faæ (1807)

Additional Papers including mail-in-transit

A third category of papers consists of miscellaneous papers seized from the captain (**'master's papers' or 'master's personal archive'**), from other members of the crew, or from passengers. These include papers from previous voyages or commands (see images 9 and 11), personal letters (image 13), business correspondence from traveling merchants or supercargo, attestations as to ownership of goods (image 12), account books, maps (both printed and hand-made), commonplace books, prayers, poems, songs, attempts to teach oneself foreign languages or navigation (image 11), sketch books (image 15), and so on. It is not uncommon to find some of the business letters translated and abstracted into the court papers, especially if this correspondence seems to imply close ties to an enemy nation (such as a business partner who is a citizen or subject of an enemy nation). Sometimes other items were seized inadvertently: quill pens, textile samples (image 10), a loose glove, playing cards, spectacles, leather wallets, and printed books or pamphlets such as almanacs.

This category also includes **mail-in-transit**. In the early modern period, a lot of post travelled by ship, and large numbers of undelivered letters lie in the Prize

Papers boxes – by one estimate, 160 000 of them.⁹ Some of this mail is still unopened, and it is especially interesting to historians today because the letter-writers were often the kind of people whose papers do not survive in other places (images 13 and 14). The Prize Papers collections include letters to and from seamen and their wives, petty merchants, soldiers, servants, prisoners of war, and even enslaved persons (though none of the latter have so far shown up for the Scandinavian colonies). They also include a significant amount of correspondence written by Jews and other diasporic communities. Ships seized in the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, and the Persian Gulf sometimes include letters and other documents in Arabic (image 12), Persian, Turkish, Armenian, and other languages.

Here are some examples of the kinds of papers and other objects seized.

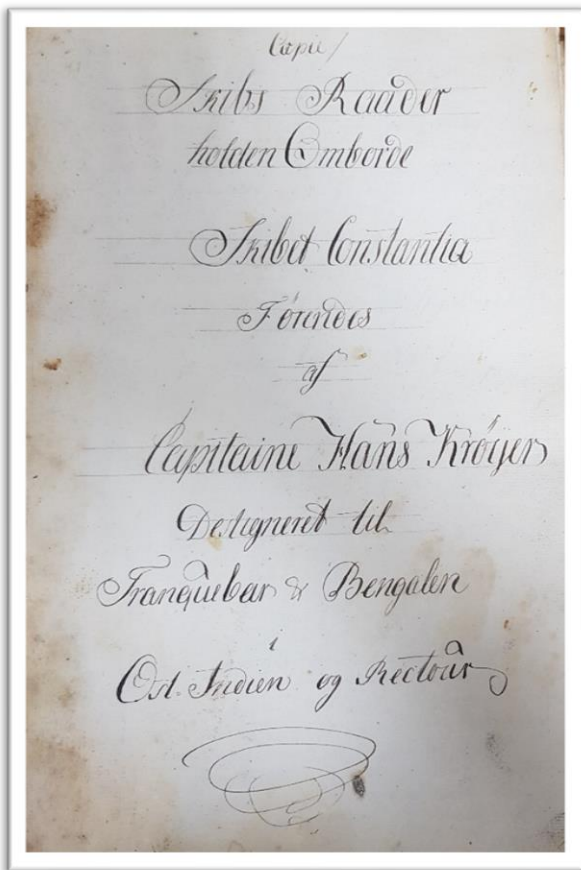


Image 9. Record of ship's counsels held aboard an East India ship named the Constantia, sailing in 1783 to Danish Tranquebar and the Bay of Bengal. It was part of the Master's archive of a man named Hans Kroyer who later commanded the ship Johanna og Maria, from which his personal papers were seized. HCA 30/757/5 Ship: Johanna og Maria (Danish), Master: Hans Kroyer (1799)

⁹ <https://www.prizepapers.de/the-project/the-prize-papers-collection> (accessed 10 Oct. 2022)



Image 10. Textile samples. These ones still look like new, despite having lain in a box for over two hundred years. HCA 32/618/281 Ship: Eenrum or Eenrom (Danish) Master: Christian Fonnier (1797)

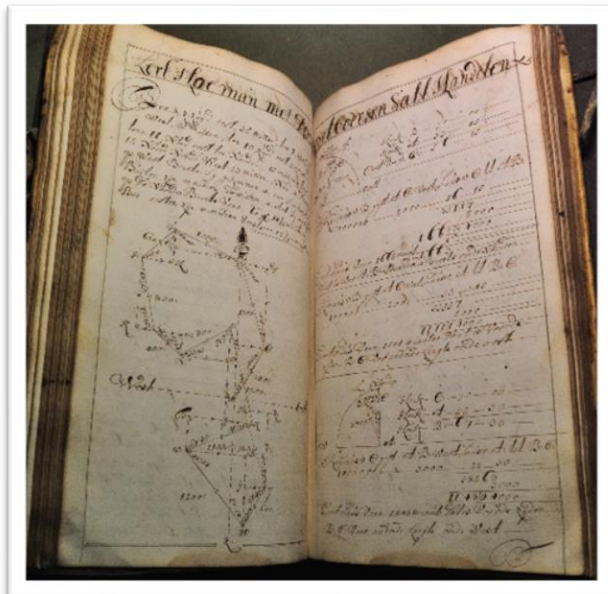


Image 11. Directions for tacking. The notebook, a hand-written manual in Dutch for stuurmen (steersmen) is dated 1709. It was originally owned and, perhaps, written by a sailor named Anders Anderson Wijkman. However, it was preserved in the papers for a ship called the Concordia, captured almost a half century later in 1758. The Concordia was a Bremen ship but with a Danish captain, and a partly Swedish and Danish crew. This notebook testifies to the multinational and multilingual character of Northern European shipping as well as the enduring value of certain kinds of knowledge HCA 32/176C Ship: Concordia (Bremen), Master: Arendt Buck (1758).

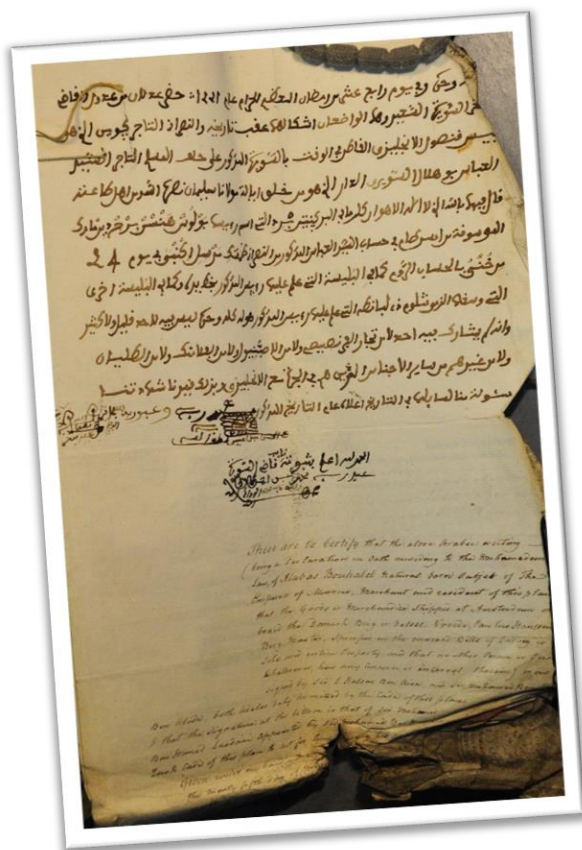


Image 12. A statement on behalf of Alabas Bouhatel, merchant and subject of the Emperor of Morocco, attesting to the fact that merchandise he has shipped aboard the Danish brig, Vrede of Bergen, is his alone. Sworn before witnesses in a Qadi court 'according to Mohammedan [i.e., shari'a] law.' HCA 32/1444/1995 Ship: Vrede/Freden (Danish), Master: Paulus Hanssen Berg (1806)



Image 13. A letter from a young sailor (probably a teenager) Hanes Billman to his parents in Marstrand, dated 14 January 1696. It reports that his captain is fond of him and has promised to instruct him (presumably in navigation). HCA 32/26. Ship uncertain and master unknown (1696). [This piece is undergoing rearrangement. Check Discovery for the new reference]



Image 14. A box of unopened letters (mail-in-transit), probably seized from the ship Anna Maria, on its way from the Faroe Islands to Copenhagen. Most of these letters are addressed to people in Copenhagen or in other Danish and Norwegian towns. A number are addressed to women. HCA 32/952/301 Ship: Anna Maria (Danish) Master: J.S. Foxmer (1807).



Image 15. Watercolor of the Protestant church and school at Moodaloor, framed by coconut and palmyra palms. Moodaloor seems to have been in the vicinity of present-day Christianagram in Tamil Nadu, India. The picture is tipped into a never-delivered letter in English from the well-known Protestant missionary William Tobias Ringeltaube (1770-1816?) HCA 32/1029 /2015, Ship: Fædres (or Foedres) Minde (Danish) Master: Christian Risbrick (1807). Thanks to Gustav Ängeby for information on the image.

4. The Significance of the Prize Papers for Nordic and global history

Nordic history is often viewed narrowly as a set of narratives about Scandinavian-speaking political regimes and their people, usually with some attention given to shifting relations between the kingdoms of Denmark and Sweden and territories under their suzerainty (Finland, Norway, Schleswig-Holstein, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, etc.). It is also possible to conceive of Nordic histories that are less focused on national narratives and on ‘Scandinavians’, however defined, within national borders, and more on the intersection between Nordic countries, Nordic peoples, and Europe-wide or global social, political, and economic trends. The latter approach has especially characterized the newer Scandinavian maritime history and the history of Scandinavian colonization attempts in North America, the Caribbean, the west coast of Africa and India. The newer scholarship on the period 1650–1815 argues that the Nordic kingdoms were important players in the unilateral and multilateral negotiations that produced ‘trade neutrality’, ‘free ports’ and ‘the law of nations.’ Moreover, the various Scandinavian colonies, while small and in some cases short-lived by comparison with those of Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, Britain and France, had a more important regional and global role than their size would suggest.¹⁰

‘Scandinavian seamen’ can also be viewed narrowly, as people born in the kingdoms of Sweden or Denmark, who came and went in Scandinavian-owned and

¹⁰ See e.g., Gunlög Fur, *A Nation of Women: Gender and Colonial Encounters Among the Delaware Indians* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Leos Müller, *Consuls, Corsairs, and Commerce: The Swedish Consular Service and Long-Distance Shipping* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2004); Leos Müller, ‘Swedish Merchant Shipping in Troubled Times: The French Revolutionary Wars and Sweden’s Neutrality 1793–1801’, *International Journal of Maritime History* 28, no. 1 (2016): 147–64; Han Jordaán and Victor Wilson, ‘The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports in the Northeastern Caribbean: Continuity and Change’ in *Dutch Atlantic Connections, 1680–1800: Linking Empires, Bridging Borders*, Atlantic World: Europe, Africa and the Americas, Vol. 29, ed. Gert Oostindie and J. Roitman (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 275–308; Victor Wilson, ‘Contraband Trade under Swedish Colours: St. Barthélemy’s Moment in the Sun, 1793–1815’, *Itinerario* 43, no. 2 (August 2019): 327–47; Lisa Hellman, *This House Is Not a Home: European Everyday Life in Canton and Macao 1730–1830*, Studies in Global Social History vol. 34 (Leiden: Brill, 2019); Jeppe Mulich, *In a Sea of Empires: Networks and Crossings in the Revolutionary Caribbean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

-built ships, largely manned by people like them. One can find seamen like this in the Prize Papers. However, there are other more transnational and transregional ways to understand ships and their often very diverse crews, and the Prize Papers offer numerous examples.

The Prize Papers can enrich both a more Scandinavian- or Nordic-focused view of history, especially maritime history, and one that situates the Scandinavian kingdoms, their diplomacy, their ships and their trade within global networks and trends. Even more importantly, they can help us to combine these two approaches, each of which has value, into a more nuanced view of these kingdoms and their diverse subjects and connections, both ‘at home’ and abroad.

Shipping in the Age of Sail

The Prize Papers contain an enormous amount of information relevant to the history of Nordic shipping, shipbuilding, travel and maritime studies in the early modern period. For example, ships’ logs (of which there are many in the Prize Papers) recorded routes, but also meteorological information and sightings of birds and other animals and exotic plants as well as both mundane and remarkable events. Ship and cargo appraisements, most of which seem to be in HCA 32, can sometimes be used to reconstruct sail plans and other technical aspects of early modern ships.¹¹ They also often indicate where the ship was built. Ports, fishing-towns and shipyards were much more widely distributed around the Nordic kingdoms in the early modern period than is the case today. In part this was because industries (e.g., iron works, tar burning places) were widely dispersed and dependent on available wood and transport possibilities; in part it was due to the changeable character of fish stocks. And in part it was because so much travel and transportation took place by boat or ship. This meant that far larger numbers of men worked as seamen at one time or another in their lives than is the case today. The prize papers give many snapshots of the maritime side of villages and towns on the coasts, the archipelagoes, the viks, and the rivers of the Scandinavian kingdoms.

The Prize Papers also testify to the world-wide distribution of Scandinavian ships and trade networks. Of special interest for historians of Scandinavian maritime history is the in-depth look the Prize Papers provide at neutrality, not just at the level of diplomacy, but as a highly contested set of practices rife with opportunism, violence, and subterfuge. At the same time, they contain valuable and detailed information, especially on shipping routes, that both complements and supplements sources like the Sound Toll registers (<http://soundtoll.nl/>), the

¹¹ ‘Appraisal’, ‘appraisment’ and ‘appraisement’ are all recommended search terms.

Algerian passes and the fribrev (see below p. 55). For instance, they allow us to reconstruct Scandinavian involvement in tramp shipping outside the confines of the Baltic and the Sound.¹² The Prize Papers also contain evidence for the involvement of Scandinavians and others in various illegal or semi-legal branches of global trade. In the early modern period, many states imposed high import duties on, or prohibited outright certain commodities, and because the Nordic lands possessed many sparsely populated and hard-to-police archipelagos, inlets and forests, its people, ships and ports were often involved in smuggling. Monopolistic claims, such as Denmark's unenforceable insistence that it had exclusive rights to whale-fishing in parts of the North Atlantic and Arctic Ocean, or the Swedish East India Company's monopoly on Swedish trade east of the Cape of Good Hope, similarly inspired less well-connected people ('interlopers') to try to break into these lucrative trades. Both smugglers and interlopers, and their ships, periodically turn up in the Prize Papers, offering new insights into this poorly documented part of the transnational economy in the early modern period.¹³

Seamen and transnational labour history

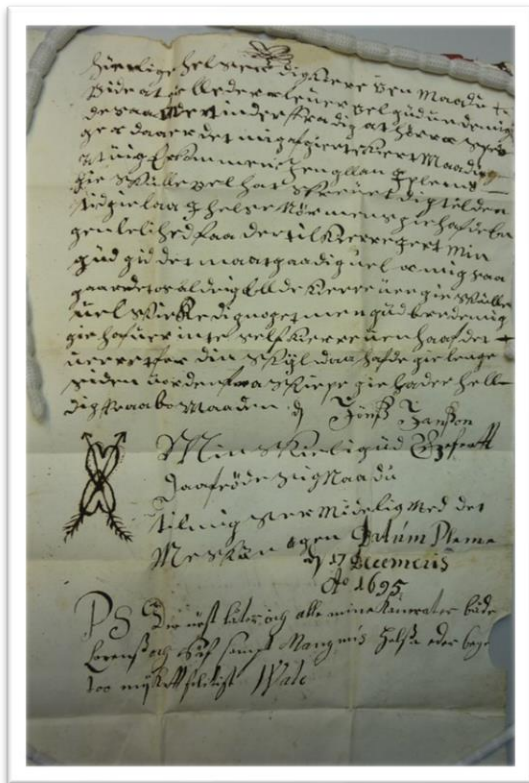
The first place to look for information on the social and labour history of seamen is the examinations (largely in HCA 32 with some in HCA 15). Since masters were almost always questioned, usually early in the legal process, we know the full names, rough ages, nationality, marital status, burgher status, and both the birth town and the current place of residence for thousands of Scandinavian skippers. It was common also to interview one or two other crewmembers and more rarely, the entire crew. A different kind of source is the many letters that have survived to and from seamen, some of them containing personal information about them or their families. Here is a letter from 1695 from a seaman named Jöns Jensen to a woman named Booll Antonisdatter living in Nilss Jörenssohn Hööier's cellar ('kielare') in Copenhagen. It is a love letter, as we can see from the intertwined hearts at the bottom, but it also mentions Jöns's unhappiness with the voyage.

¹² On Danish Algerian sea passes see Erik Gøbel, 'De Algierske Søpasprotokoller. En Kilde til Langfarten 1747-1840', *Arkiv. Tidsskrift for Arkivforskning* 9, no. 2-3 (1983): 65-108. On the Swedish Algerian sea passes see Leos Müller, 'Under Svensk Flag i Medelhavet. Algeriska Sjöpass 1770-1800' in *Från Afrikakompaniet till Tokyo: En Vänbok till György Nováky*, ed. Marie Lennersand and Leos Müller (Stockholm: Bokförlaget Exkurs, 2017), 38-63.

¹³ Thanks to Anna Knutsson for this information. See also Anna Knutsson, *Shadow Economies in the Globalising World: Smuggling in Scandinavia, 1766-1806* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2023).



Images 16 and 17. Jöns Jensen in Plymouth to Booll Antonisdotter in Copenhagen dtd. 17 December 1695. Like many newly literate people Jöns wrote phonetically. This letter displays an odd dialectal feature: 'jeg' is consistently written 'gie.'



'Uelskie[-]e dig nog et men gud bredemig gie hafuer inte self kierre uen haaf det Ueeret far din skyldaa hafde gie lenge siden uor den f[a]ra skiepe '

'I ...love you enough but god...if it was [not] for your father's sake I would have left this ship a long time ago...'

HCA 32/36. Taken from an unknown ship after a convoy of Scandinavian ships was seized by the British in 1695. Thanks to Simon Berggren for the transcription and translation. [This piece is undergoing rearrangement. Check Discovery for the new reference]

Scandinavian seamen often led very international lives. Large numbers of Scandinavians shipped out in Dutch, English, German and American vessels, they rubbed shoulders with people of diverse origins, including both Asian and African seamen, and they spoke or learned to speak a variety of languages. They also settled down in foreign countries, and sometimes married and raised families there. They operated on a global stage, and their travels are often on display in the Prize Papers.

Crews became increasingly diverse over time, and especially later in our period ships' papers often include muster rolls, so entire crews can be reconstructed. For ships coming back from the East Indies these sometimes list large complements of Asian seamen, as shown in this roll from the Danish East Indiaman *Oden*, captured in 1798. The Scandinavian officers were what was conventionally called a 'flag crew.' Their main purpose was symbolic: to prove that the ship actually was Scandinavian, and hence a neutral ship. In practice such ships were largely sailed by the Asian crew.¹⁴

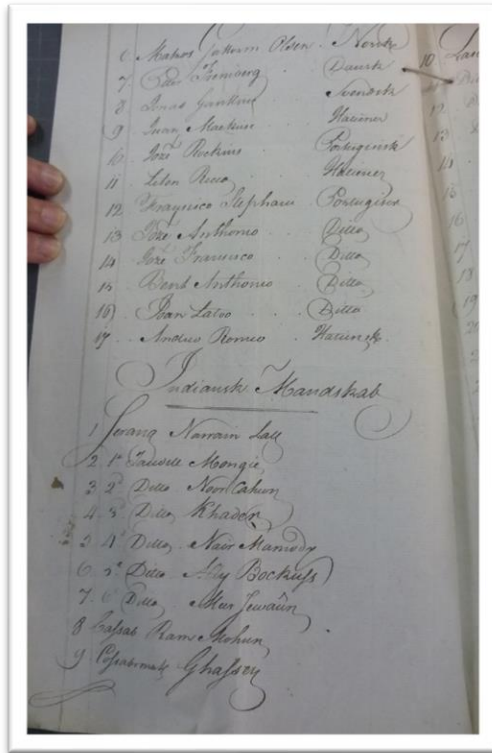


Image 18. The *Oden* was a large ship (1000 tons) and was on her way from Fredricksnagore in the Bay of Bengal, to Copenhagen when she was seized and brought into the Downs. She had a small European, or at least non-Indian crew of twenty-six, twelve of them Scandinavians, but the ship was actually sailed by an 'Indisk mandskab' (Indian crew) of seventy-nine men who answered to their own 'sarang' or crewmaster, a man named Narrain Lall. HCA 32/795/21, Ship: *Oden*, *Odins* or *Odain* (Danish), Master: Christopher Hals (1798)

Examinations and other sources also show that a good number of Scandinavians, especially in the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean, worked alongside crew-members who were slaves. Willingly or not, many people were connected in some way to Scandinavia or to Scandinavians (see below p. 34). It seems likely that, as the Prize Papers come to be studied in more detail, we will find out more about how these encounters and connections worked in practice, both on Scandinavian-owned ships and on ships of other nations.

¹⁴ This information comes from Gustav Ängeby.

Global knowledge

Seamen and passengers alike took eagerly to self-education. Seized notebooks and commonplace books show seventeenth- eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century people's efforts to teach themselves to read and write, and to learn new languages, the art of navigation and of ship handling, mathematics, law, music, astrology, medicine, and the geography and customs of unfamiliar lands. They also offer clues to how local and indigenous people passed on knowledge to seamen (for instance about piloting ships in dangerous waters, about local remedies for illness, and about trading and local products) and learned from them in return. Sometimes travelers drew or painted pictures of the places they had seen. Finally, they show us people's religious faith, in the form of theological speculations, prayers, religious songs and bible-reading.

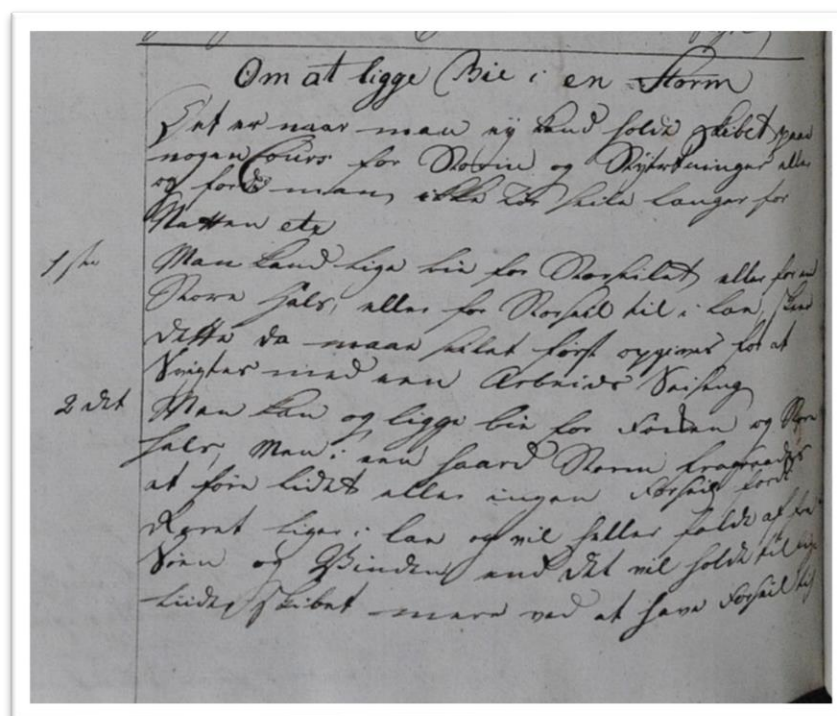


Image 19. 'Om at ligge bie i en storm' (On heaving to in a storm) offers directions for different storm rigs. HCA 32/1149/4866 Ship: Phoenix (Danish), Master: H. Breckling (1799)

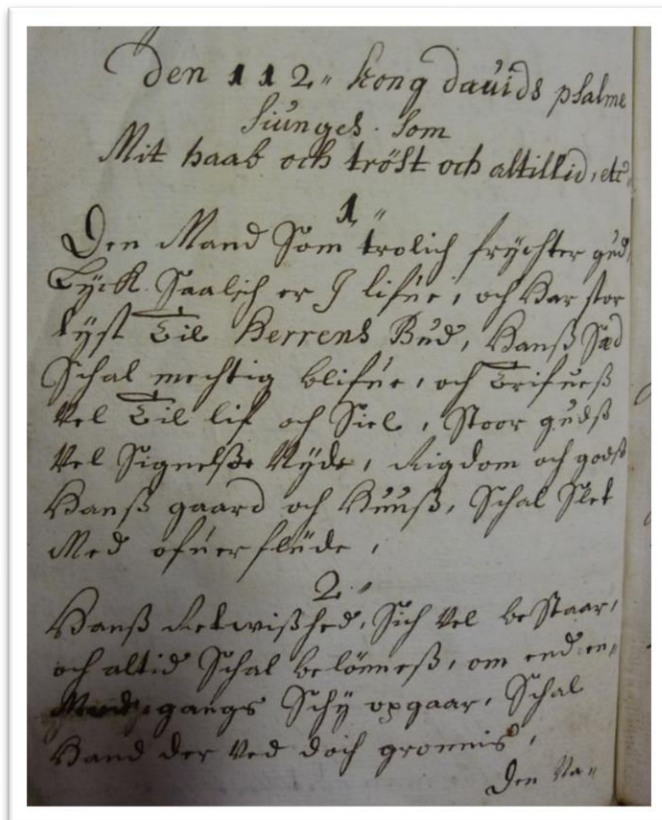


Image 20. A paraphrase of Psalm 112 ('Blessed is the man who fears the Lord') with a suggestion for a tune to sing it to. It is part of a manuscript book of prayers, religious poems and songs. HCA 32/1827/1 Ship: Juffrow Catherine of Copenhagen (Danish), Master: Hans Hansen Lowenstein (1692)

Seized papers often also include printed books, especially unbound pamphlets and the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century equivalents of cheap paperbacks. These offer many insights into the kinds of knowledge early modern travelers found valuable. Almanacs (which usually contained latitude and longitude information, as well as other kinds of advice for travelers) were very popular; so were more specialized books, such as this one (in Dutch) about navigating the monsoon winds.



Image 21. Manual in Dutch on the properties of the monsoon winds and currents en route to the Dutch colony of Batavia in Southeast Asia. HCA 32/1838Part2, Ship: Unknown (ca 1786)

Women's and gender history

Some number of Scandinavian women went to the East Indies, the Caribbean, or the short-lived New Sweden, near what is now Delaware in the United States, as wives, daughters or servants. They also were present on short coastal runs in the vicinity of the Scandinavian Peninsula, or between Iceland and Denmark. However, for Caribbean-bound shipping the majority of women on Scandinavian ships (especially Danish ships) are likely to have been kidnapped African women destined for slavery. A few Asian women also sailed on Scandinavian ships that plied the Indian Ocean (see above p. 15).

Still, you did not have to set foot on a ship to leave a mark on the historical record. There are thousands of surviving letters written to and by women in the Prize Papers, some of them still unopened. Through these we can often get information on how the families of seamen and other travelers survived while the men were away. Anxiety about one's family member's health and welfare are a central theme

in these letters, which is perhaps not surprising, given the high mortality among seafarers and travelers.¹⁵

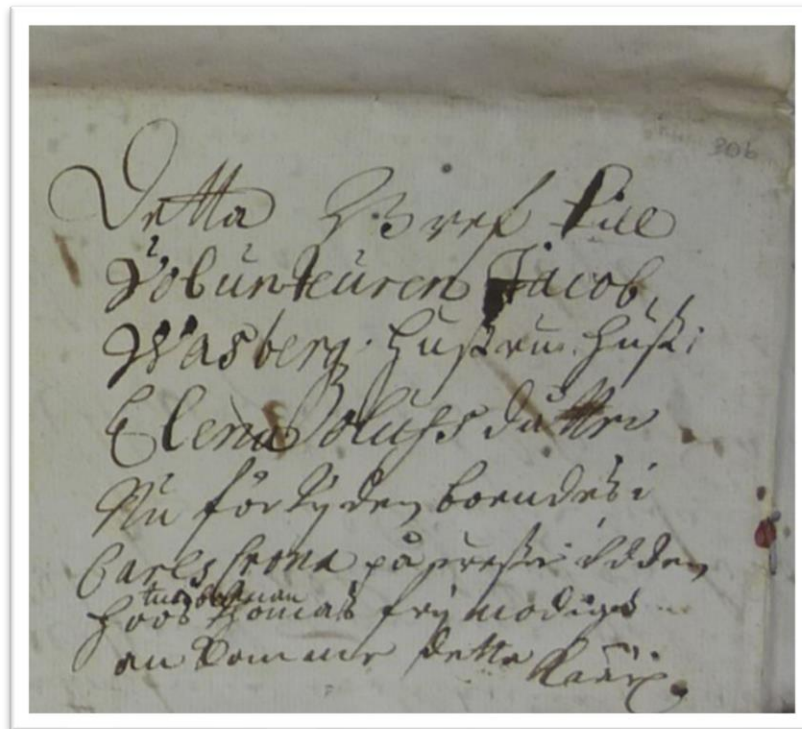


Image 22. A letter sent from 'volontären' Jacob Wasberg, on board a Swedish ship recently seized by the English, to his wife in Karlskrona. The address part of the letter reads: 'Detta brev till volontären Jacob Wasbergs hustru, hustru Elena Olofsdotter, nuförtiden boendes i Carlskrona på Prästerudden hos tunnbindaren Thomas Frimodig ankommer detta kär[igen]'. Men who were illiterate or uncomfortable with writing often paid others to pen their letters for them, which may have been the case here, since it is written in a very practiced hand. HCA 32/29 Part I Ship: unknown (1695). [This piece is undergoing rearrangement. Check Discovery for the new reference]. Thanks to Henrik Ågren for transcription.

There is also abundant evidence in the Prize Papers of women who were slave-owners, businesswomen or owners of ships. For example, the global shipping empire of Joanne Wadum Black (later Erichsen) of Copenhagen (C.S. Black's Widow and Co), especially in the years 1781 to 1800, is much in evidence in the Prize Papers

¹⁵ For mortality on Danish ships see Erik Gøbel, *Under sejl: til Asien, Afrika og Amerika: danske skibe, sejlader og sømænd 1600-1850*, Årbog/M/S Museet for Søfart, vol. 80 (Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, 2021), 326-341.

because her ships were often seized.¹⁶ More typically, women owned smaller ships, or shares of ships, and they very frequently had consignments of cargo on board even long-haul ships (e.g., to and from the East Indies). They also turn up frequently in the Prize Papers and related classes of documents petitioning the Admiralty Court or Swedish and Danish officials for the return of their property. Smaller businesswomen also make an appearance. A recent study by Annika Raapke uses Prize Papers and other sources to uncover several networks of free black women merchants, shopkeepers and retailers in and around the Caribbean island of Martinique in the 1760s to 1780s.¹⁷ Similar research projects currently ongoing for Swedish St Barthélemy and several Danish West Indian islands can be expected to uncover more networks like these.¹⁸

¹⁶ Carol Gold, *Women in Business in Early Modern Copenhagen 1740–1835* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2018), 95–104 has a lengthy discussion of Johanne Wadum Black Erichsen and her company (the C.S. part of the company name represented the initials of her first husband, Christen Schaarup Blach or Black) and of several other woman long-distance traders. Gustav Ångeby is currently writing a dissertation at Stockholm University that deals, among other topics, with the Widow C.S. Black and Company's global trade networks.

¹⁷ Annika Raapke, 'Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Stolen: Trade and Trust among Women in the Eighteenth-Century French Caribbean' in *To Take Us Lands Away: Essays in Honour of Margaret R. Hunt*, ed. Astrid Wendel-Hansen, Katarina Nordström, and Francisca Hoyer (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2022), 49–61. See also Jordaan and Wilson, 'The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports in the Northeastern Caribbean' and Ale Pålsson, 'Women in the Streets: Public Space and Gender in St Barthélemy' (Unpublished conference presentation, Nordiska Historikermötet, Göteborg, 9 August 2022).

¹⁸ See e.g., *Swedish Caribbean Colonialism 1784–1878*, Fredrik Thomasson, Principal Investigator, https://www.uu.se/en/research/projects/selected-project/?researchId=2018-06064_VR and 'In the Same Sea: The Lesser Antilles as a Common World of Slavery and Freedom', Gunvor Simonsen, Principal Investigator <https://inthesamesea.ku.dk>.

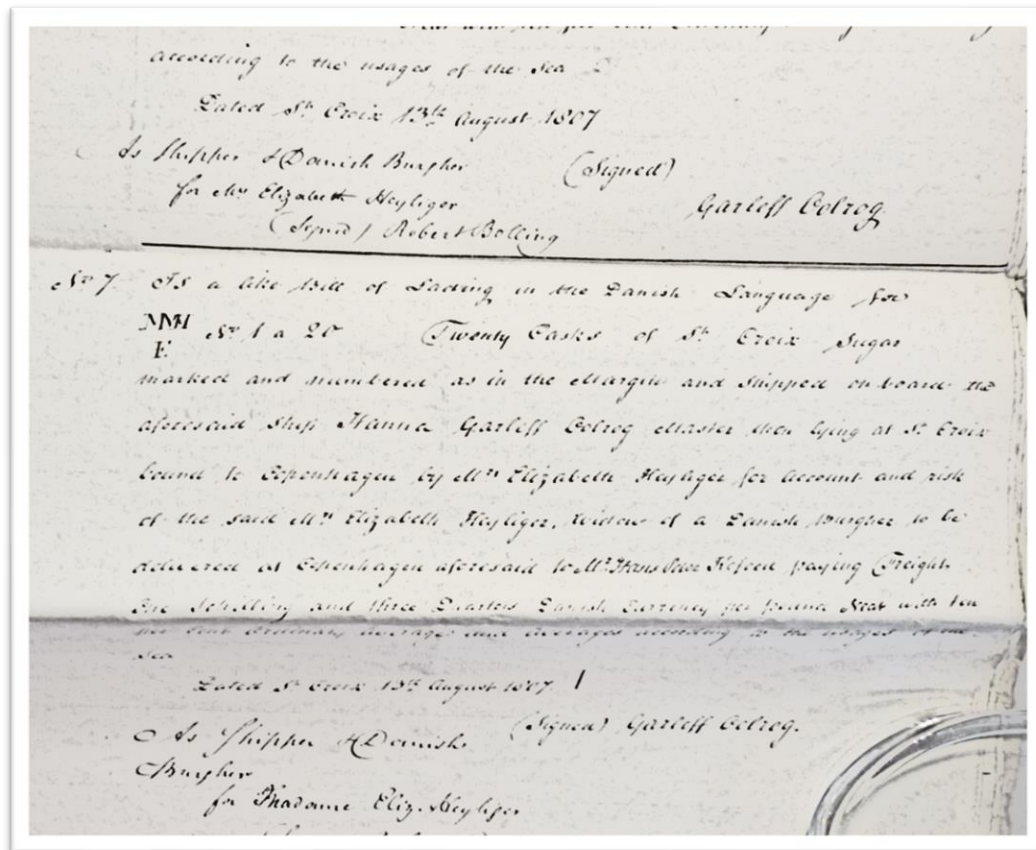


Image 23. Colonial women also participated actively in international trade. This is a translation into English of a Danish bill of lading for a merchant from St. Croix named Madame Elizabeth Hasliger, styled 'widow of a Danish burgher'. She shipped several lots of goods on this ship, including this one, consisting of twenty casks of St. Croix sugar consigned to Mr. Hans Peter Kefoell in Copenhagen. HCA 32/1498/2841, Ship: Hannah (Danish), Master: Garleff Oolrog (1807)

Business and Economic history

A mountain of business correspondence from the 1600s, 1700s and early 1800s survives in the Prize Papers, along with bills of lading, receipts, price lists, and many other documents of interest to business and economic historians. Several studies have already appeared based on these materials, though not, so far, focused on Nordic history. Sebouh David Aslanian's book *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (2014) is an in-depth account of the Armenian presence in international trade during the early to mid-eighteenth century. It is based on a large cache of documents and court records associated with an Armenian-freighted merchant

ship named the Santa Catharina, seized by the British in 1748. Lucas Haasis' recent book, *The Power of Persuasion: Becoming a Merchant in the 18th Century* (2022) is based on the business archive of a young Hamburg merchant named Nicolaus Gottlieb Luetkens which survives today because it was seized from a ship called *The Hope* in 1745.¹⁹ Studies of the social and economic networks of Scandinavian businesses and business-people abroad, using the Prize Papers, are currently in preparation.

A broad understanding of what qualifies as 'Scandinavian' is useful in this context, especially if one wants to understand the outsized role of the Scandinavian kingdoms in defining the parameters of neutrality and neutral trade. An example from the Prize Papers is a ship called the *Moideen Bux*, originally from Porto Novo in what is today the state of Tamil Nadu in India, but seized by a British privateer near Tranquebar. The case of the *Moideen Bux* generated a printed appeal (HCA 45) and it shows that Denmark's generally neutral status was well-known not just in Europe, but in the Indian Ocean world as well. In this case, the ship's owner, a man named Mohamed Ali Meyah, took steps, early in 1807, to obtain Danish colours and a Danish pass from the authorities at Tranquebar – using an Indian resident of Tranquebar as an intermediary. Given the events unfolding in Europe this was a badly timed move. In April 1808, the *Moideen Bux* was accosted by a privateer flying French colours. In response the *nākhodha* (captain) of the ship, a man named Mohamed Meyah (presumably a relative of Mohamed Ali's), tried to assert his neutrality by running Danish colours up the mast. Unfortunately, the French colours proved to be a ruse: the privateer was actually British, and war had broken out between Britain and Denmark (a fact Mohamed Ali Meyah claimed to be unaware of). The *Moideen Bux*'s people quickly changed their tune. Now they asserted that the ship was actually a Choleyar ship with Choleyar colours from Porto Novo, and that 'they had Danish Colours [only] in order to secure them from Capture by the French.'²⁰ This argument persuaded the Vice-Admiralty Court of Madras, but the Appeals judges were less impressed. They awarded the ship to its captors on the grounds that it was Danish and therefore from an enemy nation. The court did, however, rule that the owner, a British subject, could keep the cargo of captive elephants.

¹⁹ Sebouh David Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); Lucas Haasis, *The Power of Persuasion: Becoming a Merchant in the 18th Century*, *Praktiken der Subjektivierung*, vol. 23 (Bielefeld: transcript, 2022).

²⁰ Printed Appeal Papers, *Moideen Bux*, p. 2. HCA 45/63/14 (available from the Prize Papers portal, University of Oldenburg, Germany <http://portal.prizepapers.de>.)

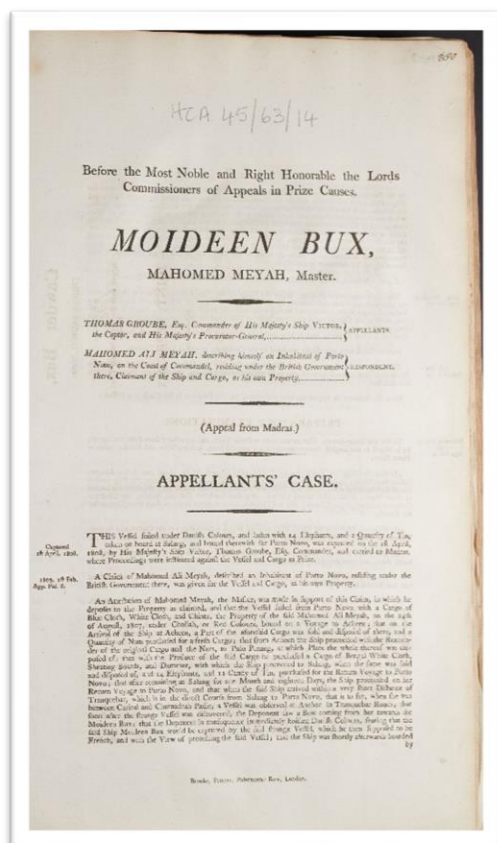


Image 24. The *Moideen Bux* was laden with fourteen elephants and some tin, and bound for Porto Novo (now Parangipettai in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu), when she was seized near Tranquebar. The British-owned privateer pretended to be French in order to lure the *Moideen Bux* into showing Danish colors. This double ‘false flag’ operation ended up working to the disadvantage of the *Moideen Bux*, probably because, by the time the appeals court made its decision in 1811, it was open season on Danish ships across the globe. HCA 45/63/14 Ship: Moideen Bux (Choleyar or Danish) Mahomed Meyah, Master, 1806

Enslaved people and the slave trade

Scandinavian slave ships sometimes turn up in the Prize Papers, including some ships listed in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade database.²¹ There are also some ships that do not currently appear in the Slave Trade database: for example a Swedish ship called *Sweriges Wapen* (Master: Abraham Brink) was seized in 1796 with 168

²¹ <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database>

enslaved people on board; they had come from Elmina on the African coast.²² Taking captives from Africa to the New World was only one aspect of the slave-based economy however. The term ‘triangle trade’ refers to the process by which, first, European goods, such as guns, cloth and iron (incidentally including large amounts of Swedish iron), were sent down to be exchanged for captives along the West African coast;²³ second, those captives were transported to the Americas and enslaved in the plantations of the Caribbean and elsewhere; and third, the slave-produced products of those plantations (principally sugar, coffee, and tobacco and later cotton) were conveyed back to manufacturers and consumers in Europe. As the case of *Sweriges Wapen* suggests, Scandinavian slave-ships often purchased their human cargo at the Danish slave fort of Christiansborg or the Dutch slave fort of Elmina (both are in modern-day Ghana), before carrying them to the Caribbean. For their part returning ships, usually carrying sugar, headed for Copenhagen, Gothenburg or Thorshavn in the Faroe Islands. The Prize Papers contain a number of ship-logs and other papers from both Scandinavian and non-Scandinavian ships involved in the triangle trade.

In the final analysis Denmark and Sweden, were not major players in the slave-capture part of the trade. However, both the Swedish and Danish West Indian colonies were important as slave entrepôts. Very large numbers of enslaved people were transported on non-Scandinavian ships, but transshipped through the ‘free ports’ of Charlotte Amalie in St Thomas and Gustavia in St Barthélemy, especially after the outbreak of the French Revolutionary Wars.²⁴ A good many shippers, both of slaves and of slave-produced products, also registered themselves or their ships at these free ports, even though they came originally from other places (principally England, Scotland, the British, Dutch and French West Indies, Brazil, or the United

²² Wilson, ‘Commerce in Disguise’, p. 147, n. 7 and Ingegerd Hildebrand, *Den svenska kolonin S:t Barthélemy och Västindiska kompaniet fram till 1796* PhD Dissertation (Lund: Lindstedts universitetsbokhandel, 1951), 244–245. See also Anne Agardh, *Brink: Den Svenske Slavkaptenen* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2012). The records of the Vice-Admiralty Court of Grenada, where the case was first adjudicated, are not extant for 1796. However, the case of the *Sweriges Vapen* did generate an appeal which is at HCA 42/336/1273.

²³ Chris Evans and Göran Rydén, ‘Voyage Iron’: An Atlantic Slave Trade Currency, its European Origins, and West African Impact’, *Past & Present* 239, no. 1 (2018): 41–70.

²⁴ See especially Wilson, ‘Commerce in Disguise’, 160–166. For scholarship on the Scandinavian colonies in Africa and the Caribbean see Holger Weiss, ed., *Ports of Globalisation, Places of Creolisation: Nordic Possessions in the Atlantic World During the Era of the Slave Trade*, Brill Studies in Global Slavery 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2015); Gunvor Simonsen, *Slave Stories: Law, Representation, and Gender in the Danish West Indies* (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2017), and Fredrik Thomasson, *Svarta S:t Barthélemy: människoöden i en svensk koloni 1785–1847* (Stockholm: Natur & Kultur, 2022).

States). Examiners often went to considerable effort to prove that these people's claims to be Danish or Swedish were flimsy, opportunistic, or of suspiciously recent vintage.

The Prize Papers also contain a significant number of personal letters from the islands back to people in Scandinavia. There is also correspondence to and from the Danish colonies in South Asia, which benefited both from slavery and from other forms of coerced or semi-coerced labour.²⁵ Not all these letters have been opened, and few have been systematically read. When they are they will doubtless cast new light on issues of race as well as slavery-related customs and practices in Scandinavian colonies and on Scandinavian ships.

Among the other slave-related material that has so far been found is an 1807 plantation journal from St. Croix, in the Danish West Indies, recording the field work that the enslaved workers did each day. This writer seldom dignifies his enslaved workforce with individual names. But on the page shown here there is a note about the death of an older enslaved woman named Terisa (no family name is provided).

²⁵ Jorge Simón Izquierdo Díaz, 'The Trade in Domestic Servants (Morianer) from Tranquebar for Upper Class Danish Homes in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century', *Itinerario* 43, no. 2 (2019): 194–217.

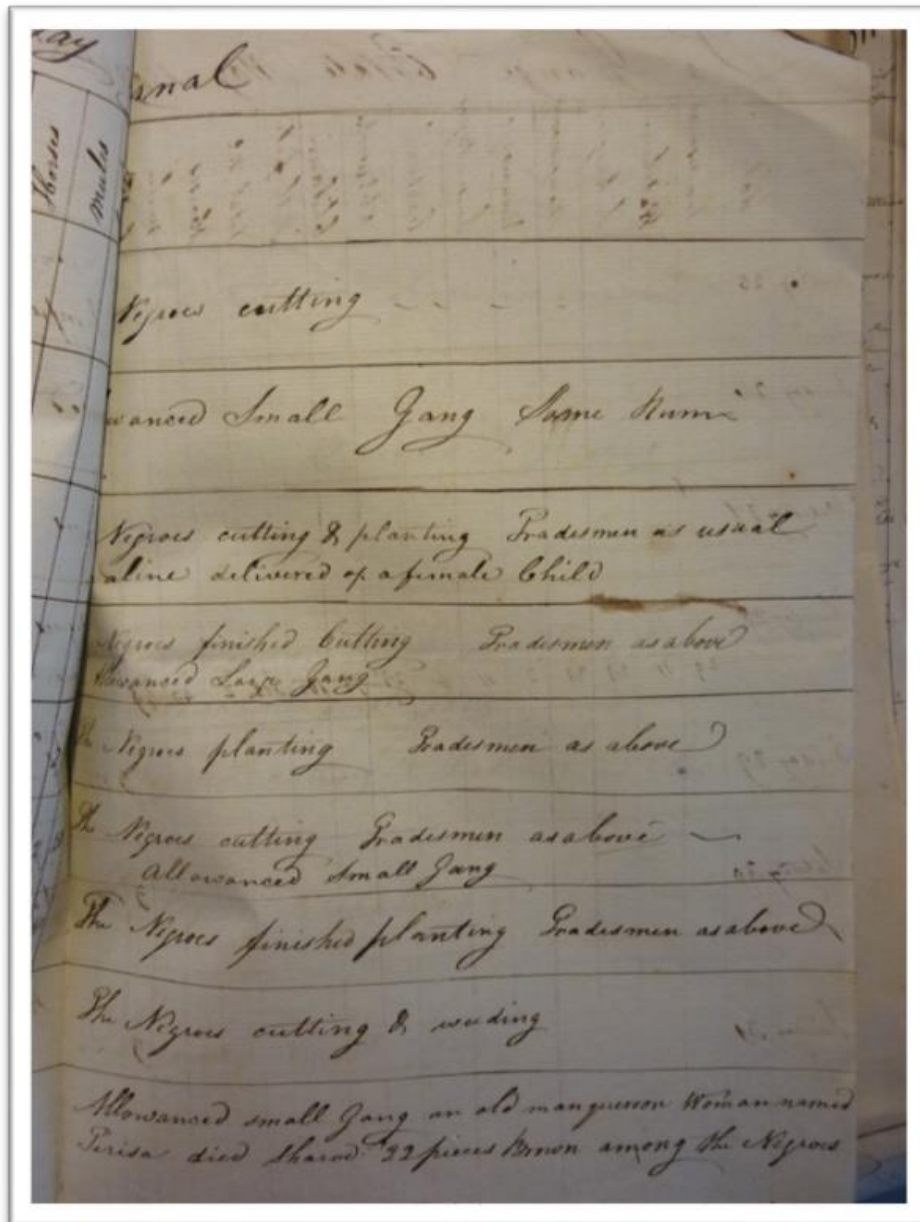


Image 25. Journal of the slave plantation La Grange of St. Croix from May 1807. It records the daily tasks of its enslaved workforce, including 'planting', 'weeding' 'cutting' and the like. At the bottom of the page is this terse note: 'an old manqueroon woman named Terisa died.' 'Manqueroon' was a derogatory term used to denote an enslaved adult who was not able to perform a full day's work due to illness, injury, disability or old age. The word presumably derives from the French word 'manque/manqué' which denotes 'lack', 'failure' or 'deficiency.' The writer's use of this term, here and elsewhere in the journal, is revealing of the way slave societies tried to reduce enslaved persons' identities solely to their capacity to work for an owner's benefit. No other information is provided about Terisa or the circumstances of her death. HCA 32/1498/2841 Ship: Hanna (Danish) Master: Garleff Oolrog, 1807

The movement of people and ships during the era of slavery was multinational and cross-regional. Consequently, researchers looking for information on Scandinavians and the slave trade are advised also to look at the case records for Dutch, French, Spanish or Portuguese (or Portuguese-Brazilian) ships. The records for British slave-ships usually are in collections other than the Prize Papers,²⁶ but a striking exception is a captured ship named the *Diamond* of London, a British ship first seized by the French, then retaken by the English in 1803. Preserved in the records is an enormous cache of colonial records and correspondence from the Dutch settlement of Elmina on the Gold coast of Africa, in what is now Ghana.²⁷ Elmina was one of the most important slave-trading depots in West Africa for well over two hundred years, and located only 150 kilometers along the coast from Danish Christiansborg, also in modern-day Ghana. The Elmina records, which are mostly in Dutch, are likely to reveal information about the Danish settlement as well as Swedish and Danish traders.²⁸

Danish and Swedish colonial networks

As indicated earlier, due to the low survival rate of cases from the vice-admiralty courts, the Prize Papers are slanted toward seizures in European waters. One estimate holds that as many as 11 000 prize cases passed through the Caribbean vice-admiralty courts alone between 1763 and 1815.²⁹ Lists of the names of ships whose cases were decided in the vice-admiralty courts survive in HCA 49/97-106 but some of these are written on stiff vellum and difficult to handle. Moreover the listings do not, in most cases, include information on the nationality of the seized

²⁶ See the National Archives guide 'How to look for records of Slavery and the British transatlantic slave trade' <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/british-transatlantic-slave-trade-records/>

²⁷ HCA 32/996, 997; HCA 30/756, 761, 767, 769, 770, 771.

²⁸ Holger Weiss, 'The Danish Gold Coast as a Multinational and Entangled Space, c. 1700-1850' in *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity: Small Time Agents in a Global Arena*, ed. Magdalena Naum and Jonas M. Nordin (New York: Springer, 2013), 243-60.

²⁹ Michael Craton, 'The Role of the Caribbean Vice Admiralty Courts in British Imperialism', *Caribbean Studies* 11, no. 2 (1971): 5-20 here p. 5 n3.

ships. HCA 49/103 contains ‘an imperfect alphabetical list’ of cases adjudicated in some vice-admiralty courts, based on HCA 49/97-101.

But even with many of the vice-admiralty cases having gone missing, the Prize Papers still offer rich materials for the study of Swedish and Danish colonial endeavors, the activities of Swedes and Danes in the service of other imperial powers, both European and non-European, and the interactions between Swedes and Danes and people of both European and non-European origin.

For example, a great many Swedish and Danish East India Company ships were seized, and their papers contain valuable information not just about Scandinavian seamen and travelers and their activities, but also about Indian Ocean history, people and trade. They can also be used to study the kinds of networks Scandinavians belonged to and created in the larger Indian Ocean world. The same can be said for ships from the West Indies and Africa.³⁰

The personal papers and mail-in-transit are also a rich source for better understanding the Europeans who went abroad, as well as the diverse people they encountered on their travels. After about 1750 a majority of the large caches of mail-in-transit are from the colonies, including a number from the Caribbean and a good number from Tranquebar and Serampore.



Image 26. Opened and unopened mail from Tranquebar and Serampore. HCA 32/543 Unknown ship (Danish?) 1793-94.

Colonial settlements periodically sent their administrative records back to the home country, and in 1806 or 1807 the authorities in Tranquebar loaded a large

³⁰ Gustav Ängeby, ‘Danes and the inter-regional trade of the India Ocean: The cases of Johanna og Maria, Sjælland, and Dorothea Elizabeth during the Revolutionary Wars (1792–1802) (Unpublished conference presentation, Nordiska Historikermötet, Göteborg, 9 August 2022).

package of colonial records, covering roughly the years 1804-1806, onto a ship called the *Foedres Minde*, bound for Copenhagen. Unfortunately, the *Foedres Minde* was captured by the British, and all the Tranquebar records, hundreds of pages of them, were stored in a box where they remain to this day. They include records pertaining to the church, defense, revenue of various kinds, the 'landsbyerna' (Tamil villages under Tranquebar's control) and the Nicobar Islands (Frederikssøerne).

Some of these records fill known archival gaps. The Zions kirkes fattigkasses regnskaber in Rigsarkivet in Copenhagen (VA. XIV, s. 150) is a valuable source for the social history of the colony. Rigsarkivet has an almost complete run of poor box records from 1781 through to 1848, missing only the years 1805/06. Now it is clear where those missing records ended up.

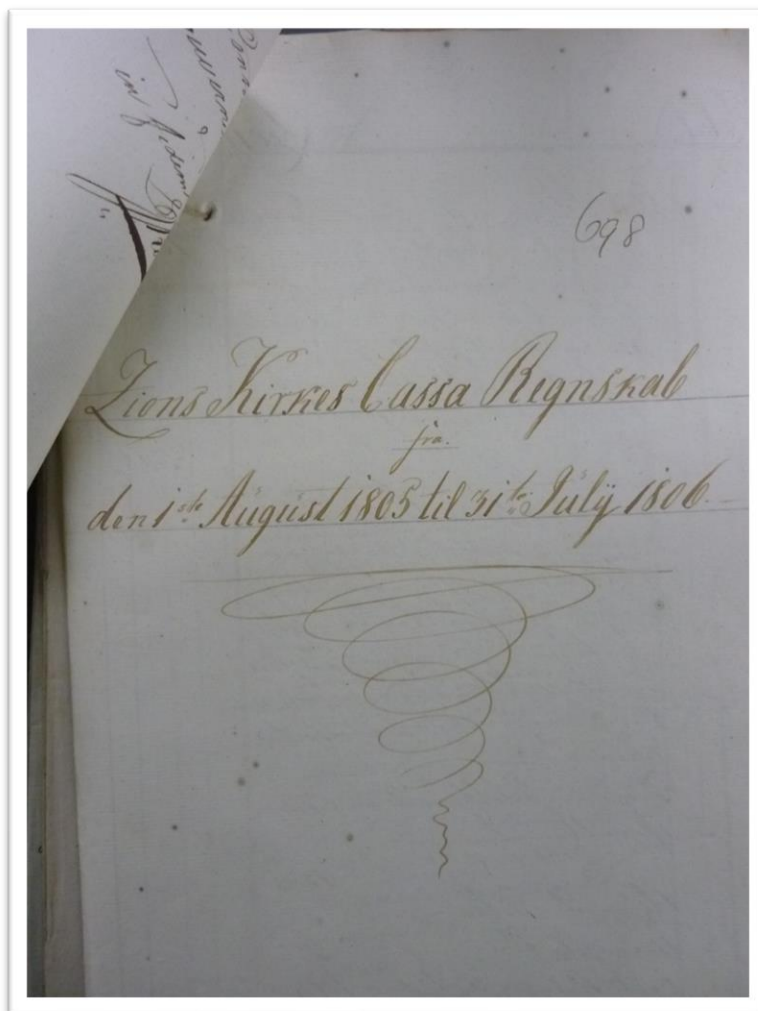


Image 27. The Zion Church of Tranquebar poor box accounts for 1805/1806, once lost but now found. The church records are accompanied by many other Tranquebar records from those years. HCA 32/1029/2015, Ship: Foedres (or Fædres) Minde, Master: Christian Risbrick (1807)

The British wars with Denmark

The most concentrated body of Scandinavian ships in the Prize Papers were seized during the French Revolutionary Wars in the 1790s; during Britain's undeclared war with the Danish-Swedish-Russian alliance (the Second League of Armed Neutrality) which reached its climax in the Spring of 1801; and during Britain's open war with Denmark between 1807 and 1814. These seizures involved thousands of ships worldwide, and Denmark was the main target, though plenty of Swedish ships were also seized (see Figure 2, p. 13).

In the late eighteenth century, the British began administering seized or occupied enemy territories, (and not just seized ships and cargo) in part via the prize courts. This means that there are numerous documents in the Prize Papers pertaining to the capture of Scandinavian (usually Danish) towns and islands across the globe after 1800. Seizures of ships in the Prize Papers are usually denoted in Discovery by the formula 'Captured ship: [ship name]', while seizures and occupations of territory are denoted by the formula 'Captured place: [place name].' 'Captured place' files are diverse. Some are clearly pro forma or intended as a flimsy cover for plundering the locals. Others detail conflicts over war booty among the capturing ships or forces, or between the British Navy and privateers. Still others (as with the Tranquebar records) offer details about the negotiations that preceded the surrender. Some files list the seized booty in some detail. Scandinavian captured places in the Prize Papers include: 'Island of Bartholomew' [St. Barthélemy] (1803), St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix (1807); Copenhagen (1807 and 1814), 'Reikewig' [Reykjavik] (1808), Thorshavn in the Faroe Isles (1808), Heligoland (1810), 'the Town and fortress of Gluckstadt' (1814), and Tranquebar (1815).³¹

In the course of these seizures of ships and territory many Danish and Norwegian men, primarily navy seamen, were made prisoners of war. Seamen from both the Danish and Swedish merchant marine were also sometimes taken captive even though not technically prisoners of war. Sometimes information on prisoners of war is to be found in the HCA records but most of it is in the Royal Navy records many of which are also in the National Archives, especially the series **ADM 103** (see below p. 53). There is also information on what happened to Scandinavian sailors while they were prisoners. Recent scholarship has suggested that conditions were not as terrible as used to be thought; on the other hand, some Danish and

³¹ The year listing represents the time the case was filed, which is not necessarily the year of capture or occupation, especially in cases that went to appeal. There are also two appeals from the Vice-Admiralty Court of Tortola regarding loans and slaves belonging to the Danish king.

Norwegian prisoners were pressured or coerced into serving on British ships.³² Danish prisoners taken in the Indian Ocean region sometimes turn up in the British East India Company (**IOR**) Records (see e.g., IOR/F/4/354/8286 for men taken prisoner at Tranquebar). These records are, however, housed at the British Library St. Pancras Branch, *not* at the National Archives at Kew (see below p. 54).

5. How to search for Scandinavian ships

Ordering Documents: Most Prize Paper call numbers begin with HCA, which stands for High Court of Admiralty (a few appeals cases start with DEL or with PCAP). This is followed by a number that refers to the **series** (e.g., HCA 32, the main prize papers series). A typical catalog reference reads as follows: **HCA 32/142**. The second part of the reference (142 in this example) refers to the **‘piece.’** A piece sometimes corresponds to a single box, *but it may also be spread across several boxes* (usually marked Part 1, Part 2, Part 3 etc. on the box). There are piece-numbers that correspond to as many as six boxes of documents.

The two-part reference (here HCA 32/142) is what you will put into the ‘Order Documents’ field in the National Archives computers or when you put in your advance order. All the boxes (‘part 1’, ‘part 2’, etc.) included in that piece will come up together from the document store, but you can only have one box/part on your desk at any one time.

Sometimes you will see a three-part reference, either in Discovery or in someone else’s footnotes, for example: HCA 32/142/22. The final number 22 is called the **item number** and *you should leave it out when you put in your order*. If you try to put it in the computer will likely reject your order. *It is important to make a note of the item number however*, because when you receive the documents, the papers of the ship you are looking for should be collected together in a folder or tied up in a bundle marked with the number 22. Some pieces contain the records for dozens or even hundreds of ships distributed across several ‘parts’. This can make it difficult to

³² Tim Leunig, Jelle van Lottum, and Bo Poulsen, ‘Surprisingly Gentle Confinement: British Treatment of Danish and Norwegian Prisoners of War during the Napoleonic Wars’, *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 66, no. 3 (September 2, 2018): 282–97; Renaud Morieux, *The Society of Prisoners: Anglo-French Wars and Incarceration in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019); Sara Caputo, *Foreign Jack Tars: The British Navy and Transnational Seafarers during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 160–180.

find the ship you are looking for unless you have the item number. For this reason, when you cite a reference for a ship in your footnotes you should always include the item number if there is one.

To recap and illustrate:

HCA is an abbreviation for High Court of Admiralty records.

HCA 32 refers to the **series** within the High Court of Admiralty.

HCA 32/142 refers to the **piece** (here piece 142), which may consist of one box or several boxes. *To order documents you will put in the series number plus the piece number (HCA 32/142 in this example).*

HCA 32/142/22 includes a reference to the **item** (here item 22), which usually refers to a single ship. In this case item 22 is a Swedish ship called the Printz Gustaf of 'Westerwick' (i.e., Västervik), seized in 1748. The papers for that one ship will generally be bundled together in a tied-up packet or folder and marked 22. You should *not* include that number when you order a document online, but you *should* use it to locate your ship once you have your documents, and you *should* include it in your references or footnotes.

Discovery, the online catalogue: The Prize Paper collections are only partially catalogued online. This makes searches more cumbersome but not impossible. Here are some suggestions for making searches more manageable and rewarding.

When you search using Discovery it may be easier to use the Advanced Search form, available at <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/advanced-search>.

The **Find words** fields are where you put in your main search terms. These could be anything: a person's name, a ship name, a nationality (Swedish, Danish, Norwegian), a port (Karlskrona, Thorshaven etc.), a type of cargo or a destination. Scandinavian merchant ships were very often named after family members of the owner(s), especially female family members, and occasionally, among the better-off, the name of the merchant's country estate. They are often named after states of mind or other abstractions, such as the ubiquitous 'Hoppet' ('The Hope'). Be aware that British court clerks often 'anglicized' Scandinavian place-names, ship-names, and personal names (see below p. 45). You can also use standard Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT), and you can indicate an exact phrase (e.g. "captured

ship”) by putting quotation marks around it. To search all words containing a particular group of letters it sometimes --but not always-- works to put asterisks around the word. Thus *slave* will yield references that include the words ‘slave’, ‘slaves’ ‘slavery’ ‘slavers’ and ‘enslaved.’³³

Filters: If you were to type the following string: Sweden OR Swedish OR Denmark or Danish into the Find Words field in Discovery, you would get over 72.000 hits, an unmanageable number.

There are many ways to limit (or ‘filter’ down) that number and speed your searches. Here are two:

1. In the Advanced Search form, scroll down to the field called **Search for or within references** and insert the letters **HCA**. This will limit your search only to High Court of Admiralty records. (If you are looking for appeals, include HCA, DEL and PCAP). You can also filter for a **series** within HCA, like HCA 42 (manuscript appeals).
2. Filter your search by date in the fields allotted for that purpose. The search engine easily allows you to limit by century, but you can also limit the search to a much smaller interval or even a single year.³⁴

Admiralty Prize Court records were traditionally organized first by **war** and second by **the name of the seized ship**. This is still largely the case. Thus, the records for each war are typically organized alphabetically, with all the ships from (e.g.) the War of Austrian Succession whose names start with ‘A’ filed together in their own piece (for the definition of a piece see above p. 42), all the ‘B’s in their own piece, etc. If you are fairly certain that a particular ship was seized and know roughly when, but you cannot find it by ship-name in Discovery, it may be worth it to call up the piece based on the above principle (the war, followed by the first letter of the ship’s name). Piece descriptions can be found in the printed HCA series lists, stored in bright red binders on the shelf in the Map/Large Documents Room on the second floor, though references should be checked on the online catalog before

³³ Leos Müller, ‘*Sophia Albertina, Enigheten, and Vassington från Norden: Ship naming in eighteenth-century Sweden*’ in *To take us lands away: essays in honour of Margaret R. Hunt*, ed. Astrid Wendel-Hansen, Katarina Nordström, and Francisca Hoyer (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2022), 279–95. I am grateful to Gustav Ängeby for information on Danish ship naming, and to Amanda Bevan for the *slave* example.

³⁴ Before 1752 the English (but not the Scottish) year was officially deemed to start on 25 March, while both Sweden and Denmark-Norway had adopted the 1 January start-of-the-year date two centuries earlier. Therefore, if the Scandinavian sources give the date 1720, it is a good idea to include both 1719 and 1720 if you are searching the English sources, especially if you suspect the event happened in January, February or March.

ordering, because the binders are no longer being updated (see below p. 51 for more details).

Ship names and nationality: Most catalogued ships are listed in Discovery using the formula ‘captured ship:’ followed by the ship’s name. Nationality (*when and if it appears in the catalogue*) tends to be listed in one of two ways. Before 1793, if the nationality is known, you can use the search-string “History: a Swedish” or “History: a Danish” to find Swedish and Danish ships. There are also a few ships listed under “History: a Norwegian” even though the vast majority of Norwegian ships are listed as Danish. After 1793, if nationality is known, there is a different search-string: ‘Nationality: Swedish’ or ‘Nationality: Danish.’ You could also search ships just using ‘Swedish’ or ‘Danish’ but that approach will not filter out cases where a non-Scandinavian ship was carrying Swedish or Danish goods.

Ships from territories settled by or under the suzerainty of the Kingdom of Sweden (including Finland, Swedish Pomerania, New Sweden in North America, the Caribbean Island of St. Barthélemy, Swedish Livonia before 1710, etc.) are almost always listed in the records as Swedish. Ships from territories settled by, or under the suzerainty of Denmark (including the Kingdom of Norway, Iceland, Greenland, the Faroe Islands, as well as Danish settlements in the Caribbean, the west coast of Africa, and India) are almost always listed as Danish. Norwegian ships are almost always listed as Danish until 1814 and thereafter as Swedish. After 1809, when Russia made Finland a Grand Duchy with the Russian tsar as Grand Duke, Finnish ships are listed as Russian.

Cataloging limitations: One cannot always rely on finding country information. Most ships are listed by ship name, master’s name and year of capture in Discovery. But in a good many cases, especially after 1793, no further information is given, *and no nationality*. You can, however, sometimes find a ship listed by its home port but not by country. Therefore, it is a good idea to supplement a search by country or nationality with a search by names of ports (Bergen, Malmö, Västervik, Gamlakarleby and so on). Note that English clerks often ‘anglicized’ Scandinavian placenames (Westerwick for Västervik; Dronton for Trondheim; Reikewig for Reykjavik, Gotenborough, or even Cottonborough for Göteborg/Gothenburg), etc.

What information can be found in Discovery? Sometimes there is a great deal. The War of Austrian Succession (1740–1748) is the gold standard and ships seized during that war are currently the most extensively catalogued in the Prize Papers. Here is a representative entry:

Captured ship: Castor of Gothenburg (master Lars Anderson).

Reference: HCA 32/102/3

Description: Captured ship: Castor of Gothenburg (master Lars Anderson).

History: a Swedish merchant ship (26 Swedish lasts, 6 men), bound from Gothenburg to Dunkirk and Bordeaux, laden with steel spikes, pitch, tar and deals; taken on 25 April 1745 by the privateer Swift (George Hudson commanding), and brought first into Dover Pier, then into the Downs, then into Sandwich Haven.

Documents:-

Court Papers:

[CP 1-CP 5]: standing interrogatories, three examinations, commissioners' affidavit;

[CP 6-CP 7]: claim and attestation of the master;

[CP 8]: attestation to deterioration of the cargoes of the Castor, the Hewa, and the St Nicholas (master Isburge);

[CP 9-CP 10]: attestation as to papers, and abstract and translation of the 9 ship's papers [which are not here].

[Decision: pitch and tar condemned, appealed 3 March 1746]

Note: Extra information from HCA 30/775/4

For most wars there is a good deal less information in Discovery. For purposes of comparison, here is a typical entry from the less fully catalogued French Revolutionary Wars:

H21. Captured ship: Hoppet (master Wik).

High Court of Admiralty: Prize Court; Prize Papers. Prize Papers of the War of 1793-1802. Captured ships (or places) with names beginning with H.

1794.

HCA 32/665/21

Judging from the ship name, *Hoppet* is almost certainly Scandinavian. Discovery does not indicate its national origin however, or indeed anything else about it

except for the master's last name and the year it was captured. To confirm the nationality of the ship and its crew you would need to order piece HCA 32/665 (consisting of seized ships from the Revolutionary Wars whose names begin with 'H'), open the box, look for item number 21, and read the examinations. For some wars (the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars for example), the majority of ships receive only a brief entry in Discovery, and many ships do not have such obviously Scandinavian names as Hoppet does. If you are able to confirm some ship's nationality and it is not listed in Discovery inform the archivists at <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/contact-us/your-views/> so that they can update the Discovery listing. Be sure to include the catalogue reference at the bottom of the form.

For some periods or series the ship names do not appear in the catalog. At the moment, for the period 1650 to about 1720, the ship names appearing in the catalogue are heavily weighted toward the beginning of the alphabet (this was a cataloging project that ran out of funding). However there is a project currently underway that will soon rectify this problem.

Most of the printed appeals (HCA 45) are catalogued by ship name, master, etc., and those cases heard between 1793 and 1815 have been digitized. The manuscript appeals (HCA 42) are extensively catalogued for the War of Austrian Succession (the Caribbean coverage is especially valuable), and relatively well for the 1790s to 1816, but less well for some other periods.

See below, Additional search aids (p. 50) for more hints on how to find ships and people if you cannot find them in Discovery.

6. How to search for Scandinavian seamen

Captains or masters of ships are often mentioned in the records, both online (in Discovery) and in printed and manuscript records, because, as previously indicated, the main way a case was identified was by the name of the ship, followed by the master's name (usually both the first and family name).

With the important exception of masters or captains, individual crew members almost never appear in any of the indexes, whether online, printed or manuscript even if an examination exists for them. You must call up the documents themselves if you want to find their names and other information about them. *An exception is the Brill Prize Papers online*, which individually indexes the names of all seamen for whom examinations survive (see p. 60).

Large numbers of Scandinavian seamen signed on to ships from other nations or entities, especially Bremen, Hamburg, the British Isles, and the Netherlands, and

there were significant communities of Scandinavians in all these places.³⁵ Sometimes this leaves its mark in the Prize Papers, as in this flyer for a marine supply store on the Radcliffe Highway in East London.

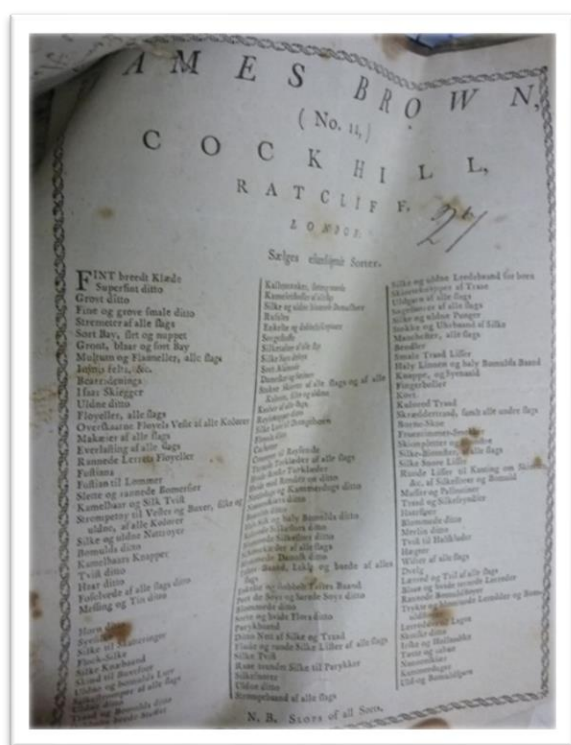


Image 28. Danish language advertising flyer from an East London maritime haberdasher. It advertises all kinds of cloth, some from the East Indies, buttons, thread, 'fruentimme smekke', and 'strombaand af alle slags'. There is a strong emphasis on cloth suitable for making cold-weather clothing. The shop also sells 'slops of all sorts' (ready-made clothes for seamen). HCA 32/543, Ship: unknown (ca. 1793-94)

Moreover, as we have seen, non-Scandinavians also sailed on Scandinavian-owned ships, particularly on ships plying the Indian Ocean, or on their way from the East Indies (see above pp. 15 and 26) while masters of ships involved in the Caribbean trade, especially the intra-Caribbean trade, often ‘rented’ enslaved seamen to fill out their crews, with the ‘rental fee’ being paid to the owner not to the sailor himself.

7. The main document series

The two series used the most by historians are **HCA 32** and **HCA 30**. **HCA 32** is the main series for court of first instance³⁶ prize court case records and it contains

³⁵ Sølvi Sogner and Jelle van Lottum, 'An Immigrant Community? Norwegian Sailors and their Wives in 17th-Century Amsterdam', *The History of the Family* 12, no. 3 (2007): 153–68 is one of the few extended discussions of this.

³⁶ A court of first instance (sometimes called the ‘lower court’) is the court where a given case is first heard, which in the case of a prize, would be shortly after the ship was seized. An appeals court, by contrast, takes a second look at a case because one of the parties is unhappy with the outcome in the lower court.

records for at least 30 000 ships of many nations. The vast majority of HCA 32 cases were adjudicated in London. HCA 30 is ‘Admiralty miscellanea’, and over the years it has often been used to archive exhibits, especially ships’ papers and personal and business papers of crewmembers and passengers. Some mail-in-transit has also ended up in HCA 30. HCA 30 contains records for well over 2 000 ships, with some ships appearing both in HCA 32 and HCA 30.

Ships’ papers, personal and business papers and mail-in-transit can also be found in HCA 32, but the concentration is higher in HCA 30. Both HCA 32 and HCA 30 are organized first by war and then by ship-name and usually the papers related to a particular ship are tied together in their own bundle (as indicated above, this is called ‘an item’). Both HCA 32 and HCA 30 also contain examinations of the captain and often of a couple of crew members. If the examinations for a particular ship cannot be found in HCA 32 or HCA 30 they may be in **HCA 13**. HCA 13 consists of examinations and answers up to the year 1750 for ships brought into London or the River Thames on capture. HCA 13 examinations are bound into volumes with an index of ship names at the back. Other useful series include **HCA 24**, *Libels* and *Allegations* which outline the arguments of the two sides, and **HCA 22**, *interim* or *interlocutory decrees*. The final decision of the court, called a *sentence*, is found in the series **HCA 24 and 34**. Most of HCA 34 is bound into volumes, and there is typically an index of ship names at the back of each volume.

Another important group of records comes from the **vice-admiralty courts**. These were also courts of first instance, but they were set up outside London, most often in the colonies. There were vice-admiralty courts at one time or another in New South Wales (Australia), Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Ceylon, Sierra Leone, the Cape of Good Hope, Gibraltar, Minorca, Halifax (Nova Scotia), New York (before and during the American Revolution), New Jersey, Nassau in the Bahamas, and numerous Caribbean islands, including Jamaica, Tortola, Antigua and St. Christopher. This by no means exhausts the list of vice-admiralty courts. *Many vice-admiralty records are archived outside of Britain* (see below p. 56).

The vice-admiralty court records archived at TNA are mainly in **HCA 49**. The biggest group of these by far is the records of the Vice-admiralty Court of the Cape of Good Hope between 1797 and 1805 (HCA 49/1-44)³⁷ and there are also fairly

³⁷ See J.P. van Niekerk, ‘Judge John Holland and the Vice-Admiralty Court of the Cape of Good Hope, 1797-1803: Some Introductory and Biographical Notes (Part 1)’, *Fundamina* 23, no. 2 (2017): 176-210, <https://doi.org/10.17159/2411-7870/2017/v23n2a8>; and J. P. van Niekerk, ‘Judge John Holland and the Vice-Admiralty Court of the Cape of Good Hope, 1797-1803: Some Introductory and Biographical Notes (Part 2)’, *Fundamina* 24, no. 1 (2018): 134-69, <https://doi.org/10.17159/2411-7870/2018/v24n1a6>.

extensive records for the Vice-admiralty Court of Minorca from 1799–1802 (HCA 49/45–56) and the Vice-admiralty Court of Cape Nicholas Mole, Saint Domingue (Santo Domingo) from 1797–99 (HCA 49/45–56). HCA 49 also contains miscellaneous records from the vice-admiralty courts of Guadaloupe and Jamaica.

There is also an important run of cases from the Vice-Admiralty Court of British New York (1775–1783) which were evacuated back to Britain at the end of the War of American Independence and are now interfiled with **HCA 32/260** through **HCA 32/399**.

The problem of the missing vice-admiralty court records can be partially offset by using appeals cases, because the majority of these were appeals from vice-admiralty courts, and most of the appeals records are extant. However, it still leaves the problem that only a minority of cases from courts of first instance went to appeal.³⁸

The **Appeals** are primarily found in **HCA 42** (manuscript appeals) and **HCA 45** (printed appeals). **HCA 17** contains some appeals deriving from British attempts to abolish the slave trade. **PCAP 13** contains more printed appeals, many but not all of which are duplicates of appeals in HCA 45. The HCA 45 printed appeals for 1793 to 1817 have recently been put online by the Prize Papers project at the University of Oldenburg (see below p. 59). The HCA 45 appeals are particularly valuable for three reasons. First, as indicated above, they often are appeals against vice-admiralty decisions, so they partially offset the latter's spotty survival rate. Second, because they are in print form, they are more accessible than the manuscript papers. Third, the HCA 45 series (and the manuscript appeals in **HCA 42 and 17**) give a global picture, with seizures in the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, along the east coast of North America and the west coast of Africa, in the Indian Ocean, and in the Pacific. **HCA 48** contains the appeal judge's sentences (the final decision in a case) but only for the years 1672–1718 and 1759–1772. Sometimes the final decision of the appeal court in individual cases can be found in other sources, such as newspapers or in English, Swedish or Danish state papers.

8. Additional search aids

Online guide to the HCA: The archivists at the National Archives have written a very accessible online guide to their records, entitled: *How to look for records of High Court of Admiralty* at <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your->

³⁸ For example, in the Vice-Admiralty Court of Jamaica between 1776 and 1802 only 11 per cent of the cases went to appeal. Craton, 'Caribbean Vice Admiralty Courts, 1763–1815', p. 361 (Appendix D).

[research/research-guides/high-court-admiralty-records/](https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/browse/r/h/C1100). An earlier version of this guide is available as a flyer in the Map and Large Documents Room.

Discovery: the Browse function:

Go to <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/browse/r/h/C1100> for an online ‘map’ with hyperlinks, of the series divisions within HCA. These include Instance (civil cases) and Oyer and Terminer (criminal cases) as well as prize cases. They also include both vice-admiralty and High Court of Appeals series. You can get an overview of the whole court and its processes from these, though the Red Binders (below) are arguably more user-friendly.

The Red Binders for HCA Series (on the open shelves in the Map Room on the second floor) are still one of the best ways to get an overview of High Court of Admiralty records, as well as general descriptions of each piece. *They stopped being updated in 2013 however, and they are especially out-of-date for the late seventeenth-century records*, so use them with care and check the references in the online catalog before you order anything. Most of the pieces for later wars still retain their original numbers, at least as of now.



List and Index Society volumes 112 (1756–1763), 183 (1776–1780), 184 (1793–1802), and 194 (1803–1817) contain ship-name indexes and sometimes show nationality. Much of the information there has now been transferred to Discovery, but the volumes can be useful for showing how large a particular piece is, which is not always clear from Discovery. The volumes can be found in the National Archives Reference Library on Floor 1.

Contemporary Indexes (IND 1) These are manuscript indexes compiled in the seventeenth, eighteenth or early nineteenth century when individual ships were still going through the court process. Often these reveal information that is not in Discovery, though the earlier indexes are not always very easy to decipher. They can also be a shortcut to finding decrees and sentences (the sentence is the final judgement of the court). In the newer online descriptions of cases in HCA 32 there is often a note indicating the relevant IND volume, whether there was an appeal and the sentence if known. Sentences are most often to be found in HCA 24, HCA 34 and HCA 48 (Appeals), which have been bound into volumes. None of these are indexed online; however, the volumes often have ship-name indexes at the back. Others correspond to IND 1 indexes. Ask an archivist to advise you if you need information on the judgement for a particular prize case.

9. Beyond the HCA

This research guide is confined to manuscript material. There are a great many printed books and pamphlets from the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries pertaining to prizes including polemical pamphlets for or against the condemnation of a given prize or set of prizes; lists of prizes taken by Swedish, Danish or English privateers or navy ships; newspaper reports of judgements in various prize courts; English law reports (which occasionally provide details for cases whose records have not survived); rules for convoys, attempts to regulate privateers; and so on.³⁹ These are not detailed in this research guide because there are too many and often they can be searched through online library catalogs or databases such as Libris (for Sweden); Kb.dk (for Denmark and Norway); and Early English Books Online (EEBO), Eighteenth-century Collections (ECCO), and the British Library online catalog (for Britain).

At the National Archives at Kew but not in the HCA series

Royal Navy Records (series ADM). The ADM series contain a significant amount of information on the seizure of Swedish and Danish ships by ships of the British Royal Navy, especially during the English wars with Denmark. These records often

³⁹ See e.g., *Wij Carl medh Gudz Nåde, Sweriges, Göthes och Wändes Konung, ... Theras Handels och Navigations Säkerheet, medh Sändelse Omwårdnat och Försorg, ... Wisse Convoyer at Förordna ...* ([Stockholm]: [Kungl. tryckeriet], 1673); *Fortegnelse paa de Bøger, som forefandtes i det med Kaperfører Jens Sørensen opbragte og ved Overadmiralitets-Retten priisdømte Skib Retsaa, hvilke v. off. Auct. borts* (Copenhagen: 1811); *A Short Account of the True State of the Case of the Suedish Merchant-Fleet Lately Brought up, on Their Voyage from France, by Admiral Rooke, and Sent into Plimouth* (London: Eliz. Whitlock near Stationers Hall, 1697).

reflect the perspective of the navy ships and privateers who carried out the seizures and stood to benefit from them. The largest amount of prize business can be found in ADM 1 (see especially in-letters from captains) and ADM 106 (Records of the Navy Board). There are also at least 27 registers of names of Danish prisoners of war in ADM 103 (Prisoner of War Department and predecessors). There is also correspondence pertaining to Danish prisoners in other ADM series and at the Caird Library of the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich. The online catalog for the Caird is <https://www.rmg.co.uk/collections/archive>.

Foreign Office (Series **FO**). This series includes extensive information on the slave trade and its suppression, as well as information on prize-taking.

State Papers Foreign (Series **SP 95** for Sweden; Series **SP 75** for Denmark). These series often contain information about prize-taking (including Swedish and Danish privateers seizing English or British ships), as well as many claims and protests. Parts of the State Papers have been digitized.

Colonial Office (Series **CO**). Several cases involving Swedish vessels from the Vice-Admiralty Court of St. Christopher are attached to a letter from Governor John Stanly to Henry Dundas, July 31, 1793 and are at **CO 152/74**.⁴⁰

Probate Records (Series **PROB**). Wills can be a useful way to find out about seamen's family and other connections, and many Scandinavian mariners died abroad. An especially accessible source for mariners' wills is the PROB series (Prerogative Court of Canterbury). These are indexed in Discovery by the name, and often the occupation of the testator and PDFs of the probated wills are available online. Useful search terms are 'mariner' and 'seaman'. At present these are free *to registered users of the National Archives only*, though this may change.

This is a probated copy of the last will and testament of Peter Christianson of Christiania (Oslo) in Norway, who probably died in 1710 on an English ship or in a British port. It leaves all his assets to his three brothers in Norway, but the executor is a man from the riverside parish of Wapping, suggesting that Christianson was based in London when he wrote the will.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Thanks to Jeppe Mulich for this information.

⁴¹ Note that many seamen's wills were probated in local or diocesan courts, such as the Commissary Courts of London and Surrey or the various diocesan Consistory Courts. These wills are not in the National Archives. The London and some of the Surrey records are in the London Metropolitan Archives 40 Northampton Road, London EC1R.



Image 29. I Petter Christianson of Christiania in Norway in the Kingdom of Denmark, Mariner...make, publish and declare this my last Will and Testament in manner following...I recommend my soul to God that gave it and my body I commit to the Earth or Sea as it shall please God to order...' Christianson made his will on 26 March 1708, and two years later he was dead.

TNA PROB 11/517/346

At the British Library

British East India Company Records: Information on Danish prisoners of war in India (taken during the occupation of Tranquebar and other Danish territories) can be found in the India Office Records (IOR) in the British Library. The IOR records also contain miscellaneous papers relating to the vice-admiralty courts in India (locations included Madras, Calcutta and Bombay), and occasional claims or appeals. *They are housed in the Asian & African Studies Reading Room at the British Library, St. Pancras Branch, 96 Euston Rd, London NW1 2DB.*

Scotland

Scottish High Court of Admiralty: Scotland had its own High Court of Admiralty until 1832. Some cases were, however, appealed to the British Privy Council. Because of Scotland's proximity to Scandinavia many ships were seized by Scottish privateers, or, before the 1707 Act of Union with England, by ships from the Scottish navy. The Scottish records can be accessed at the Historical Search Room in General Register House, 2 Princes Street, Edinburgh.

Sweden

Diplomatica Anglica, (Riksarkivet in Stockholm). This series runs from 1559 to 1809, and contains extensive correspondence to and from Swedish envoys, ambassadors, agents, consuls, etc., as well as correspondence between the English and Swedish royal court and with the English parliament and Protectorate during the

Interregnum. It often details disputes and interventions with respect to seizures of Swedish ships.

Kommerskollegium (Riksarkivet)

This collection holds two of the most valuable and informative series of ships' papers available in Sweden. These are the [sjöpassdiarier](#), 1739–1831 (also known as the Algerian Sea passes) and the [fribrevsdiarier](#), 1758–1831. The registers are available online: [Sjöpassdiarier, 1739–1831](#) and [Fribrevsdiarier 1758–1831](#).

For Fribrev for the period 1666–1710 see Riksarkivet Kommerskollegium series B II a, B II c, E III a and E III c. some of which have been microfilmed.⁴²

Sjömanshus: The most comprehensive information on Swedish mariners comes from the archives of Swedish seamen's houses (Sjömanshus). These institutions existed between 1748 and 1961 and combined the functions of a seaman's registry bureau and a mutual help association. Lists of enrolled seamen (sjömansrullor), collected from local archives, have been brought together into a database through the Riksarkivet SVAR (Arkion). The database currently includes about 360 000 Swedish seamen from ten Swedish and Finnish ports (Gamlakarleby, Gävle, Härnösand, Hudiksvall, Karlskrona, Oskarshamn, Söderhamn, Visby, Västervik and Örnsköldsvik). Unfortunately, the database does not include the biggest seamen's houses (Stockholm and Gothenburg). See <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sjomanshus>.

Denmark

Departementet for de Udenlandske Anliggender, 1779–1845 (Rigsarkivet)

The Foreign Office papers include a large general series devoted to Danish ships seized by foreign nations or foreign ships seized by Danish privateers. Some of the material has been [digitized](#). There is also an extensive collection relating to the condemnation of high-stakes ships seized between 1771–1814. This too is partially [digitized](#).

The collection also contains a dedicated series devoted to ships seized by various nations. For an example, there is a section on Danish ships seized by Spain (Vejl. arkiv. reg. XXIV, s. 138, Spain)

⁴² A good introduction to the fribrev is Jan Kilburn, 'Den Svenska Utrikeshandelsflottan Åren 1795–1820. En Pilotstudie i Kommerskollegiums Fribrevsdiarier', ed. Mats Kero and Leos Müller, *Forum Navale: Skrifter Utgivna av Sjöhistoriska Samfundet* 63 (2007): 38–69.

Of particular interest for people studying the Prize Papers is a series devoted to the ship Freya, whose seizure by the British set in motion the chain of events that led to the bombing of Copenhagen in 1801. It is [digitized](#).

There is also a rare and unique collection related to the activities of the Prize Court of British Tortola, 1771–1801, for which very few records survive in the National Archives at Kew.⁴³ It is [digitized](#).

Udenrigsministeriet, Departementet for Handels og Konsulatssager (1849–1866) (Rigsarkivet)

This collection from the Foreign Office Department of Trade and Consular Matters includes several letter books pertaining to Danish ships seized during the Crimean War ('blockade, opbringelse og condemnation').

Kommercekollegiet (1735–1816) (Rigsarkivet)

There is a large Board of Commerce collection relating to Danish ships seized by the French during the Revolutionary Wars (VA XXII, s. 146).⁴⁴

Tyske Kancelli, Udenrigske Afdeling (Rigsarkivet)

The German Chancellery, Department of Foreign Affairs includes material on Danish ships seized by British privateers during the Seven Years' War (VA XI, Tyske Kancelli II, s. 210 TKUA, Speciel del, England 49).

Asiatisk Kompagni, Afdelingen i København (Rigsarkivet)

The Asiatic Company collection includes a small number of papers pertaining to ships seized or lost at sea during the Fourth Anglo–Dutch War, including the case of the ship *Castellet Dansborg* seized by the Dutch at the Cape of Good Hope in 1782 (VA XIV, s. 99)

Other countries

The most important sources archived outside of the British Isles or Scandinavia are vice-admiralty court records (see above p. 49 for vice-admiralty records archived at the National Archives). There is no comprehensive list of vice-admiralty records

⁴³ See Mulich, *In a Sea of Empires*, 97–99 for a discussion of the Tortola Prize Court and relations between Tortola and the neighboring Danish island of St Thomas.

⁴⁴ Pierrick Pourchasse, 'Danish Shipping in the Mediterranean during the Revolutionary Wars (1793–1795)', *International Journal of Maritime History* 28, no. 1 (2016): 165–79 makes use of some of this material.

housed abroad and the following list is not complete, partly because some vice-admiralty courts were temporary wartime expedients. Like the London court, most vice-admiralty courts were not occupied only with prize cases. They also heard civil ('instance') cases such as disputes over mariners' wages, and criminal cases such as trials of pirates.

Bermuda Vice-Admiralty Court: The Government of Bermuda – Archives, Hamilton, Bermuda holds case papers covering the years 1799 to 1892 and a number of lists, minute books, and miscellaneous papers.

Halifax Vice-Admiralty Court: The Nova Scotia Archives contain 48 volumes of records of the Halifax Court covering the years 1749 to 1891 (for proceedings) and 1761 to 1891 (for case files). Some of the Nova Scotia records are now in the Library and Archives Canada (LAC). A finding aid to the latter is

<http://data2.archives.ca/pdf/pdf001/p0000001066.pdf>

Some of the records now at the LAC are digitized at:

https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_mikan_105370#issuesList

Jamaica Vice-Admiralty Court: Extensive records for the Vice-Admiralty court of Jamaica covering the years 1776 to 1813 are held at the Jamaica Archives and Records Department, Archives Unit in Spanish Town, Jamaica.⁴⁵

Nassau Vice-Admiralty Court: The Department of Archives, Commonwealth of The Bahamas has fifteen boxes of papers of vice-admiralty records covering the years 1804–1911.

New South Wales Vice-Admiralty Court: The State Archives of New South Wales, Australia has an extensive collection of records from the Vice-Admiralty Court, which began operating in 1787. The surviving case papers are mostly from 1826 on. See <https://search.records.nsw.gov.au/>

New York Vice-Admiralty Court: The New York Public Library holds a volume of Vice-Admiralty Court decisions made between 1753 and 1770. That volume has been [digitized](#) (see above p. 50 for New York Vice-Admiralty Court records in the National Archives at Kew).

Rhode Island Vice-Admiralty Court: the Rhode Island State Archives in Providence, Rhode Island, (statearchives@sos.ri.gov) holds 11 volumes of Admiralty court records from 1723–1786. Some of them are said to have been microfilmed. Some of these records are described or reproduced in *Records of the Vice-Admiralty Court of Rhode Island, 1716–1752*. ed. Dorothy Siemering Towle, (American Legal

⁴⁵ Thanks to Margaret Williams Pryce for this information.

Records. American Historical Association Vol.3) (Washington: American Historical Association, 1936).

10. The Prize Papers after 1815

The Suppression of the slave trade

Britain abolished the slave trade, but not the institution of slavery, in 1807.⁴⁶ However, with some exceptions, such as the Sierra Leone Vice-Admiralty Court (1807-1817), created specifically to enforce the abolition of the slave trade, it did not begin systematically enforcing that ban until the Congress of Vienna of 1814-15.⁴⁷ Both before and after 1815 prize law and the vice-admiralty administrative structure were used at models for the seizure of slave ships. This had some significant drawbacks. At least in the early days, slave ships were seized, and their human cargo confiscated, only, in some cases, to be sold as 'prize goods.' There are a number of records in the HCA and other series, such as Navy (ADM), Customs Office (CO) and Foreign Office (FO), bearing on attempts to suppress the trade, but the main ones in the High Court of Admiralty are:

HCA 35 – Report Books of the Slave Trade Adviser to the Treasury, 1821-1891

HCA 36 – Unregistered Papers, Slave Trade Adviser to the Treasury, 1837-1876,

HCA 37 – Registered Papers, Slave Trade Adviser to the Treasury, 1821-1897

HCA 17, 42 and 45 – Appeals from various courts, but especially the Sierra Leone Vice-Admiralty Court.

For further information consult the National Archives guide: [*How to look for records of Slavery and the British transatlantic slave trade.*](#)

The Crimean War

The Crimean War had a strategically significant Baltic theatre that is well known to historians of the Nordic regions but often neglected by historians elsewhere. The Kingdoms of Sweden and Denmark both maintained a position of strict neutrality throughout most of the war, though both considered joining the Allied side (consisting of the Ottoman Empire, Britain, France and Sardinia, and later Austria).

⁴⁶ Portugal and Denmark abolished the slave trade earlier (in 1761 and 1803 respectively). In the Portuguese case the ban only extended to transporting slaves to European Portugal. Denmark's share in the slave trade was minimal by 1803 so the measure was largely symbolic.

⁴⁷ Mulich, *In a Sea of Empires*, 134-156 has an overview of the participation of Danish and Swedish Caribbean ports in the illegal slave trade into the 1820s.

Sweden did agree to enter the war just before Russia sued for peace. There is a separate series of Prize Papers for the Crimean War (**HCA 33**) which mainly documents seizures of ships sailing under the Russian flag. It is, however, likely that most of these were manned and owned by Finns since the Russian Empire did not have a merchant fleet of its own. There were also around 15 Swedish or Danish ships seized, presumably caught with contraband of war or trying to run the Allies' blockade.⁴⁸

11. Digitization and the future of the collection

The New York Public Library Digital Collections

These consist of around 70 printed prize appeals mostly from the years 1744–58 bound into two volumes. They include handwritten annotations by judges deciding the cases. In many cases additional papers can be found in the HCA collection, but some of the NYPL cases appear to be unique or at least not currently listed in Discovery. Both Swedish and Danish ships are represented. See <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/prize-appeals#/?tab=about>

The German-UK Prize Papers Project: This project, funded by the German state and the federal state of Lower Saxony, aims at 'the complete digitization and sorting of the Prize Papers including the preservation of the collection's material, the initial and in-depth cataloguing, the creation of research-oriented metadata and finally the presentation of the digital copies and the metadata in an open access research database.' The process is expected to take many years. The main focus is HCA 32 and HCA 30, though HCA 45 (printed appeals) from 1793 to 1815 (consisting of some 57 000 pages) has also recently gone online in a beta-version.

<https://www.prizepapers.de/the-project/the-prize-papers-collection/the-portal>

In addition to the later printed appeals, a selection of case studies of ten French ships from the War of the Austrian Succession has just come online.

<https://www.prizepapers.de/stories/case-studies/case-study-french-prizes/>. The full war of the Austrian Succession is expected soon. More extensive cataloguing and digitization of the bulk of the collection will make the papers much more accessible than they currently are and can be expected to have a significant impact on scholarship. It will also make it much easier to identify Scandinavian seamen, including those seamen who sailed on non-Scandinavian ships.

⁴⁸Yrjö Kaukiainen, *Sailing into Twilight: Finnish Shipping in an Age of Transport Revolution, 1860–1914*, *Studia Historica* (Helsinki) 39 (Helsinki: SHS, 1991).

The Brill Prize Papers (1652-1784): The title of this database is somewhat misleading because it only digitizes examinations and none of the other types of documents usually understood to make up the ‘Prize Papers’ such as court papers (apart from the examinations), ships’ papers, the private and business archives of crew members and passengers, or mail-in-transit. Only a very limited version of the Brill Prize Papers database is available on open access, and to our knowledge no libraries or archives in any Nordic countries possess a subscription. However, *the National Archives at Kew owns the full subscription*, and makes it available to users but only if you are physically in the National Archives at the time. The valuable and unique feature of the Brill Prize Papers database is that it indexes the first and last names of *every person who submitted to an examination* (not just the captain) and gives their nationality. This is useful for all kinds of inquiries, including quantitative social and economic history and genealogical research. Also on the plus side, the digital images of the examinations are beautifully rendered and easy to read. Ask an archivist to guide you to the link on the National Archives site.

Dutch digitizations: Dutch scholars were the first to use the Prize Papers extensively and there have been a number of digitization projects. The Dutch digitization projects emphasize Dutch ships and Dutch-language materials.

Dutch Prize Papers: <https://prizepapers.huygens.knaw.nl/> is the most extensive digitization project to date. It includes 72 000 scans of documents from 87 pieces in the HCA 32 and HCA 30 series. The images are very clear; however the attempts to OCR the manuscripts tend to distract from the documents. If you can get a full-screen this becomes a quite manageable image database. Most ships in the database are Dutch though there are a few Scandinavian ships. See e.g., HCA 32/2, the Golden Phoenix out of Stockholm (1666), and HCA 32/618, the Eenrum (also Eenrom) of Denmark (1802), which also includes papers for another Danish ship, the Mathilda Maria.

Brieven als Buit (Letters as Loot) project: <https://brievenalsbuit.ivdnt.org/corpus-frontend/BaB/search> The seized letters from the Prize Papers Letters are as close as one is likely to get to the speech of everyday people in the early modern period. This innovative project digitized, transcribed and marked up around 1000 seventeenth-century Dutch letters from the Prize Papers collection as part of a large historical linguistics project on early modern vernacular speech.⁴⁹ Letters can be grouped or searched according to the gender of the letter-writer, where she or he is living, and a variety of other social and sociolinguistic criteria. Words,

⁴⁹ Gijsbert Rutten and Marijke J. van der Wal, *Letters as Loot: A Sociolinguistic Approach to Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Dutch*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2014),

orthographies and word order, as well as other linguistic and philological data can also be searched across the whole corpus.

Another Dutch project that uses the Prize Papers extensively is: Maritime Careers: The Life and Work of Dutch Merchant Marine Sailors 1700–Present

<https://www.maritimecareers.eu/humigec/> This owes a lot to a project by Jelle van Lottum et al., in which the Prize Papers examinations and related sources were used to ask a series of quantitative and qualitative questions about the work lives and travels of mariners in the North Atlantic region (see above p. 14n). The page ‘Sailor’s Lives’ has an excellent section on Scandinavian mariners on Dutch ships, as well as material on other migratory mariners, like lascars (one of the commoner terms for Asian seamen).⁵⁰

Danish microfilms: Rigsarkivet in Copenhagen began filming the records of Danish ships in HCA 32 sometime in the 1960s or 1970s, but the project was never completed. The collection consists of microfilms for Danish ships captured between 1794 and 1801 whose names begin with the letters D, E, F, G, H, I/J and N. This translates to about 170 ships or around 20 per cent of the Danish ships captured in that eight-year period for which there are records in the British National Archives. Most of the files include only examinations and claims. Some of the reproductions are blurry and difficult to read.⁵¹

12. How to obtain a National Archives reader’s ticket

You must obtain a reader’s ticket (reader’s card) if you want to use the National Archives at Kew. See below for the link: *you are strongly advised to pre-register online well in advance, and while you are still in your home country*, since some of the necessary documents are hard to obtain if you are abroad. You will need at least two forms of identification, one with your signature and picture and *one that proves your permanent address*.

For the first of these you can use your passport. *But the second can be a challenge especially if you do not live in an English-speaking country*. In the past the National Archives (and the British Library, which has essentially the same policy) called for a notarized translation if your proof of address was not in English, and downloaded e-statements (e.g., from banks) were not allowed. *This policy appears to have been*

⁵⁰ On the complexity and instability of the term ‘lascar’ see Matthias van Rossum, ‘Lost in Translation? Maritime Identity and Identification in Asia under the VOC,’ *Journal for Maritime Research* 16, no. 2 (July 2014): 139–52,

⁵¹ I am grateful to Gustav Ängeby for this information.

relaxed somewhat. The National Archives now seems to be prepared to accept one or more of the following: a) downloaded bank statements *in Scandinavian languages* from Scandinavian banks, *with your name and address on them*, though they may ask you actually to log in to the bank or other entity and show them the screen with your name and address on it; b) ORIGINAL Skatteverket, Skattemyndighetene or Skatte Styrelsen statements *with your name and address on them*, that came to you in the mail in the last year; c) ORIGINAL Scandinavian utility bills (electrical, water, TV etc.) *with your name and address on them* that came to you in the mail and are less than three months old; d) ORIGINAL Salary or pension statements *with your name and address on them* that came to you in the mail and are less than three months old. If you have switched to e-statements for all your bills, bring the downloaded hard copy for several of them, *but also be prepared to log into your account and show them the screen containing your name and address.* Again, it is advisable to pre-register online for your reader's card, so that some of these problems can be worked out in advance and while you are still close to home and can obtain the documents you need.

<https://secure.nationalarchives.gov.uk/login/reader-register>

Virtually all Prize Papers documents must be read in the **Map and large document reading room** and you do not have a choice to use a different reading room. The Map and large document reading room has far fewer seats than the ordinary Document reading room, especially in summer. Therefore, it is a good idea to reserve a seat in advance. You can reserve at:

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/book-a-reading-room-visit/standard-order-visit/availability>. Make sure to press 'Update availability' once you have chosen the option for Map and large document reading room. Note that if the documents you want are not available, it is possible they are being worked on by TNA's Prize Papers team. You may still be able to get access to them; just check with the archivist on duty.

If you want to contact the Prize Paper archivists for advice check with the archivist on duty in the Map Room or use the form [Make a records and research enquiry - Contact us \(nationalarchives.gov.uk\)](#) and include the words 'Enquiry for the Prize Papers team'"

If you want to make a suggestion about fuller cataloging or catch an error in the catalog please contact <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/contact-us/your-views/> and remember to include the catalogue reference.

You are allowed to take pictures of documents in the Map and Large Document Reading Room, but not to use a flash. The Map Room has a limited number of fixed

camera stands which are useful if you are photographing a large number of documents.

13. Citing sources from the Prize Papers

A bare-bones citation would be as follows. Be sure to include the final ‘item’ number (in this case /4) *if there is one*.

1. The British National Archives [hereafter TNA] HCA 32/1861/4.

It is common to also provide information about the seized ship in the note. The most common information to include is: the ship’s name or names, its nationality, the master or captain’s name, and the date of capture. There is no standard order for how the information should appear.

2. TNA HCA 32/1861/4 Ship: Calmer Castle also known as Kalmar Slott (Swedish) Master: Jean Mollet, seized 1692.

If you are looking at, say, correspondence within the papers for a particular ship you may want to be even more detailed. Prize case papers often do not have folio numbers.

3. Sworn copies of two letters from the Duke of Newcastle, dtd 21 February 1746 (unfoliated) pertaining to a petition from a merchant of Tripoli named Ahmed Bensarty. TNA HCA 42/45/1 (Appeal from the Vice Admiralty Court of Minorca) Ship: Peace (French or Dutch sailing under Swedish colours) Master: Gerrit Cornelis Raaners, seized 25 August 1745.