

Social dynamics on Danish sail ships 1690 – 1721

(Communication of roles and behaviour on board Danish West India and Guinea Company
ships)

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Abstract

This thesis is a phenomenological study of life on board for sailors on Danish-Norwegian long-distance merchant ships. This is examined through how roles and accepted behaviour was communicated to the sailors in the regulated shipboard society. The phenomenological analysis is based on a materialistic study of life on board, using primary sources, material remains, and secondary literature. The case study for the phenomenological study is the Danish West India and Guinea Company (WIGC), specifically in the time period 1690 - 1721. The focus is on using WIGC ships as a case study for social dynamics among the crew in the long-distance trade routes in the early days of large-scale globalization. The phenomenological analysis highlights that spaces, sound, and time were central aspects of life on board. The designation of people in some roles to limited areas, and the amount of people in those areas, created spaces on board that were defined by different sub-cultures. Sound in the form of voices was a core element of life on board, in that talking and storytelling were what filled the soundscape.

Life on board in the context of the global nature of the journey was defined by that the globe was seen from a local place, being the ship. This society spoke Danish, with some creoloids of Danish and other languages. Some other languages were represented on board, and the highest officers may take part in an international network of correspondence. When slaves were on board the global nature of the ship increased radically. Central finds are that the shipboard society was closely based on that on Danish naval ships. Regulations were set up to prevent a shipboard economy among the crew, and to prevent the effectiveness of victimizing weaker individuals. The role of the merchant captain has been further explored in this thesis. The captain was particular, in that he was not a worker. Beyond preparing the crew and the ship for the journey, he was more of a symbol on the ship. He was not required or expected to take part in navigation, steering, or other work. The regulations for society on board was set up to protect the hierarchy. High officers had potential to gain a significantly larger additional profit from private trade than sailors. Shipboard society and the privileges of the officers reflect power relations in the Early Modern period that protected highly placed individuals, and enabled wealthy individuals to get wealthier, while restricting the opportunities of poorer people for the same.

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Introduction

This thesis is about life on board some of the merchant ships of the Danish West India and Guinea Company (WIGC). These ships were individually quite small places, with crew populations of between 40 and 60 people on board. However, the ships were set up with a strict hierarchy, and strict guidelines for how life on board should be. In an isolated sense, these ships are incredibly local places to study. However, life on board was set up in a way that was a reflection of the purpose of the ships. It was a reflection of that life on board was an element of the Company's participation in the global economy and the increasingly globalized world. This world had become defined by Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, and English merchants and statesmen over the last century. Denmark had been competing for centuries with Sweden for their place as a dominant power in Scandinavia and the Baltic. In the 17th century, a new stage was developing, a global stage, that could ensure the strength of the Danish monarchy not only in the North, but in Europe and the world. The ships, sailor by sailor and ship by ship, were effectively the way of tying together ideas, goods, places and money to make wealth from this system. The system was based on a profit stemming from the Caribbean, which came from selling slaves, and using slave labour to produce sugar and other products.

Historical context

In the 17th century, the globalization of trade and the connection of different countries and continents through trade and knowledge networks were reaching new heights. The Dutch merchant fleet was the largest in Europe already in the 15th century.¹ In 1580 no Dutch ships had left Europe for a trade mission.² 30 years later Dutch merchants were sailing regularly on five different continents. There was an explosion of global trade, and the knowledge of other parts of the globe was growing on all continents. At the heart of the mechanism of this were the physical vessels that carried people, information and goods from one continent to another, the merchant ships. The technological developments in ship building, mixed with the desire for and financial need for trade goods from all over the world, were among the main drivers

¹ Prak (2002) p. 14.

² Gelder (1997) p. 33.

of globalization. Sailors, ship officers and other travellers published travel descriptions that spread the knowledge of both the world and of sailor life in most of western and central Europe. The wealth that came with these processes also led to wealth in culture. As an example the Dutch Golden Age is considered to have coincided with the beginning and rise of Dutch global trade ventures (ca. 1600 – 1715).³ Painters such as Rembrandt and Vermeer are only the tip of the ice berg of the artists, architects and engineers that were active in the Netherlands and the rest of Europe in this period.

Slavery

This thesis explores what life was like for the crews on some of the ships in the growing global network in this time. The major aspect that makes this wealth a negative element of history is that a significant part of it was based on slavery. This slavery was based on racism. The presence of slavery was particularly relevant for the WIGC. It was at the heart of their possibility for financial profits. The WIGC was active in the Atlantic region, which meant they took part in the triangular trade network that bought slaves in Africa and sold them as commodities in the Caribbean. This is a sad chapter in human history and the world is still not done dealing with the ramifications of it. Ridding the world of the problems that stem from the attitudes that enabled slavery in the triangular trade is one of the biggest social issues in the world today. Despite these ships being slave ships, this is not the topic of this thesis. This thesis is about long-distance merchant sailors, for which the WIGC ships are case studies. This might skew the results as far as being relevant concerning the people that were on board the WIGC ships. The aim is to create generaliseable knowledge or abstractions about conditions for long-distance merchant sailors, of which there were more types than the slave traders. The WIGC ships are case studies for long-distance merchant ships as places, instead of being the primary focus of study as ships or voyages in their entirety. The availability of sources for the WIGC, for the purpose of studying long-distance merchant ships, is one of the factors that contributed to this usage of the material.

³ Prak (2002) p. 275

Establishment of trade companies

The Danish crown and Danish merchants established global trade companies early. In 1616 a Danish East India Company was established.⁴ In comparison, the Dutch East India Company was established in 1602.⁵ In 1625, a few Dutch merchants received a charter from Denmark on trade with the Caribbean. However, no trade was done due to the Danish-Norwegian participation in the Thirty Years War. Another company for the same trade was set up in 1653, called “Vestindisk Kompagni”⁶, and established a colony on the Caribbean island St. Thomas, which today is in the U.S. Virgin Islands. A further company, called “Guineisk Kompagni”⁷, was set up in the 1650s as well. When the commercial department of the royal administration, “Commercekollegiet”, was established in 1668, and the new king, Frederick 3., took the throne, a change was about to come for the companies. In 1674, “Vestindisk Guineisk Kompagni” (WIGC)⁸ became a united company of its two predecessors.⁹

Setting up a colony on St. Thomas

The ship named *Færø* was outfitted and prepared in Copenhagen, and was sent to re-settle the island of St. Thomas. The island had been settled and abandoned by a Danish expedition some time before. The ship hosted 180 people meant to populate the Danish-Norwegian new world, and a governor, Jørgen Iversen. Between Copenhagen and St. Thomas, 77 of the passengers died aboard the ship. The ship eventually reached the bay where they would make their capital. After only 7 months of living in the Caribbean, and without producing a shipment to send back to Copenhagen, 75 more people had died.¹⁰ Only 28 remained alive. 152 people dead within the first year of leaving Copenhagen shows how unprepared the company were for what they were trying to achieve. The settlers created a safe haven for pirates, eventually run by a nearly lawless political elite.

⁴ Eilstrup (1974) p. 20.

⁵ Glamann (1958) p. 3

⁶ Translation: West Indian Company

⁷ Translation: Guinean Company

⁸ Translation: West Indian Guinean Company, WIGC

⁹ Eilstrup (1974) Pp. 36-37.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 32.

St. Thomas in the hands of a private individual

In the late 1680s the shareholders in the Company had grown tired of not getting a return on their soon 15-year-long investment. Therefore, they decided to lease the whole island, and the rights to the slave trade, to a private person in 1690. The super-wealthy Norwegian Thormölen, a man from Bergen of north German heritage, became the private owner of a lease for St. Thomas for a period of 10 years. However, the increased piracy and privateering in the region contributed to that Thormölen did not manage to make profits on his personal colonial venture. He cancelled the agreement after only four years.¹¹

This thesis is about the conditions for the crews that travelled between Denmark-Norway, Africa and St. Thomas, connecting the territories that represented this system.

¹¹ Westergaard (1917)

Theory and methodology

Introduction

The main body of this thesis is a materialistic analysis of life on and the structure of WIGC ships, using secondary literature to make this picture fuller. The purpose of this is to lay the grounds for a phenomenological analysis of life as a sailor on WIGC ships. The goal of using these two approaches is to understand further aspects of life on the WIGC ships than the hierarchy, the ship type and the inventory on board, which is what the primary sources currently provide. It is also hoped that this makes it possible to say something meaningful and useful about the WIGC ship as a case study of the long-distance merchant ship as a place. Furthermore, it is hoped this can say something relevant about power relations in Danish-Norwegian society in the time period.

Research questions

The research questions for this thesis are the following four questions:

- In what ways were roles, rules and the expected behaviour communicated and illustrated to those on board?
- What other ways was this communicated than the spoken word?
- What were the dynamics between some role-holders and others?
- Using a phenomenological approach, based on a materialistic examination of the WIGC ships, what can be said about social dynamics on board WIGC ships between 1690 and 1721?

Furthermore, two smaller sub-questions will also be attempted answered:

- Were the differences between people on board great?
- How was life on board affected by the economic and political game the merchants and royalty in Denmark and Norway took part in?

Materialistic approach

The materialistic approach is inspired by various uses of Marxist historical writing, and the methodology of archaeological reports that present a site or a structure piece by piece. Marxist historical writing focuses on materialism in the form of economics and physical conditions in order to emphasize realistic material conditions of people in different positions. This is often done to emphasize differences between people. This approach is used in this thesis to present the physical conditions and realities of people in different positions on the ships. In turn, this lays the ground for a phenomenological analysis. This creates something of a recreation of the WIGC ship as a physical place. Because witness accounts are limited, a theoretical approach can allow for a particular presentation of the conditions.

Phenomenological perspective

The British archaeologist Christopher Tilley published the book called “A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments” in 1994. Tilley’s book is a theoretical perspective on landscape, and how man-made features in the landscape create a particular focus or sharpening of the landscape. In it he presents how walking a historic or archaeological site, seeing the site in context of its location within other features in the landscape, and also in the sensory or phenomenological context of the person who walks there, is enriching to the understanding of the site. Tilley includes a lavish amount of photographs of the site to illustrate it to the reader, but his interpretation beyond the visual and intellectual is perhaps the primary point. He includes sounds, smells and other sensory observations that would have been an element of the site in the time period he is investigating. The tempo of his presentation of the observations adds another element to the site, time itself. He investigates the site in the Neolithic as a patient observer. The information about the site he adds in is based on extensive knowledge of the technology, material culture and use of similar sites in the Neolithic. This means that he is observing, based on the information available to him, as it would have been in the Neolithic. It is clear, based on his presentation, that he is not in a rush, and he is not emotionally involved. He is a patient observer, who takes in everything he can about the site, and can observe the tempo of the perceived events going on around him as well as the other sensory phenomena. It is not the emotional or social aspects of the people he

primarily observes, it is the interaction between people and the site and people and objects. Using the materialistic and phenomenological approaches together is in other words the approach chosen to attempt to say something about social dynamics, by studying roles, social structure, physical structure and to some extent physical objects.

Using a view such as that presented by Tilley, a site or a place in the past is not only the material remains or drawn plans. It is the sensory world of that site, combined with the material remains and plans. Elements such as sight, sound and tempo become part of the analysis of the site. They ideally should reveal additional dimensions that are not necessarily readily apparent. Tilley used his perspective for Neolithic sites in a landscape, which is a physical stone structure in a landscape. A ship at sea is different in that it is not a permanent location, and it is in the fluid elements of water and air. However, a ship at sea is a physical feature that stands out strongly against the elements it is in. It is a physical and visual feature to those who interact with it, and in the seascape, the atmosphere and the visual scape it is in. As such, it will be analysed as a site, an object and a place. Its spaces and physical elements have had uses and sub-cultures. These can be investigated individually and collectively, and in the context of the sea- and skyscape they existed within.

Relevance

The choice of studying the WIGC was originally made because of their ships' role in Scandinavian globalization in a time period where technology and society was dramatically different from the present day. As such, the choice was made inspired by these ships' roles in globalization, and in that sense perhaps fit into the study of globalization. However, the ships are studied in themselves here. In the present day, the world is to an extent in a similar position to some of what European society was at in the 17th century. What was to become large-scale globalization then may become large-scale interplanetary travel now. Space travel is well known and fairly common to the major space faring countries. However, technologically and culturally, space travel is likely only in its infant stage, as various space agencies already plan to travel to and found towns on the Moon and on Mars. This inspires an interest in the last period such a process was in its early stages, which arguably is the

colonization of the Americas and early globalization. Perhaps especially from the perspective of smaller countries, it is interesting to study aspects of the globalization that was starting to gain significant ground in the 17th century, to highlight what role they played in the systems dominated by the larger countries. That larger countries took the largest places in this process led to that English, French and Spanish became global languages, with particularly England defining the parameters of global societies focused on progress. Since the decolonization of the world continued even into the 1990s, with the UK giving up authority of Hong Kong, the world is still dealing with the repercussions of the developments that started several hundred years ago. More than ever, social media is giving a voice to those who want to discuss the continued decolonisation of society decades after formal ties were cut. The early globalization processes are thus relevant in society in the present day, both because of decolonisation of society and because of the curiosity of the similarity with the ambitions for human life in space. The choice was made for this paper to focus on the ships, rather than the processes of globalization in society. Specifically, selected aspects of life on board those ships were made the choice of focus, in order to gain a window into the physical vessels that created the connections between places and ideas.

Before the WIGC was chosen for this paper, the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), the Dutch East India Company, was explored for similar aspects. However, because of access to the several different types of ship documents for specific ships in one place, and because of the comparative limitation of numbers of ships and sources, the WIGC was chosen. Because of the motivation behind the initial query, the question of whether the choice of case studies would be from the WIGC or the VOC was actually not essential. However, since Denmark-Norway was then and still are smaller countries than the Netherlands, and especially in the sense of being a small country in view of drivers of global travel and trade in the chosen time period, the WIGC turned out to be a suitable choice. The fact that the choice of case studies was not necessarily essential is reflected in the material in this paper – not all of it is exclusively relevant to the WIGC. Several aspects overlap in factual areas with other ships in the time period, such as ships from the Danish East India Company, the Danish-Norwegian navy, the VOC, and presumably also to some extent on other similar types of Dutch and English ships. Even though some of it may be relevant also for other types of ships, the emphasis is on investigating what is specific to the WIGC ships.

Time period

The limitation in time is between the years of 1690 and 1721. These cut offs are not considered to be strict limitations, and were set for practical reasons. The time period of 1700 – 1721, which in some cases is given as 1709 – 1721 for Denmark-Norway, is the time of the Great Northern War. This war caused the wrecking of many ships. Two of them are *Lossen* and *Prinsessan Hedvig Sophia*, which have been found and excavated. This conflict has led to publications and studies concerning life at sea. Furthermore, during this conflict Daniel Trosner, a Norwegian sailor on Danish naval ships, kept a diary that through its texts and illustrations has provided insights into life on Danish naval ships in the time period. It has also individually spawned more studies. The time period is then one that has a certain amount of information available about ships, sailors and the organization of seafaring for the navy. This information is to some extent only circumstantial to this thesis, but the fact that it exists and has material evidence to support it means it is helpful context for understanding WIGC ships. The end of the period for the study thus coincides with the end of this war, because of the practicality of the availability of sources for this time period.

The earlier limit of the time period, 1690, was set in order to have a larger time period to take samples from. This means that the ships that sailed to St. Thomas between 1690 and 1721 sailed both in war time and in peace. However, the focus is on the material and sensory realities of life on board after they left the home area, instead of danger or politics related to the conflict. As such, the conflict, though present in much of the time period, is not a factor in the presentation or analysis in this thesis. It will be presumed that life on board was a continuation of the traditions for the company ships before the war. This seems to be what the material reflects, but further research on the ships before and during the war is also encouraged.

Slavery

There is no doubt that one of the main conditions for the financial success of the WIGCs endeavours originated in the use of slaves as labour force in the production facilities. The

WIGC transported slaves they bought in Africa and sold them at St. Thomas and other islands in the Caribbean. Danish historian Henning Henningsen wrote in the foreword to Per Eilstrup and Nils Eric Boesgaard's book "Fjernt fra Danmark Billeder fra vore Tropekolonier, Slavehandel og Kinafart"¹² that the comparatively speaking small number of slaves Danish-Norwegian ships transported in the total picture of the triangular trade does not lessen the crime or excuse the participation. Concerning the number of slaves that were transported on Danish ships, he wrote in 1974: "That is not a lot, but of course bad enough, and we must bear our responsibility along with the other European maritime powers."¹³

This thesis was written with complete awareness of that slavery was at the core of the WIGC's activities, and that the people on the ships that carried slaves were consciously taking part in this activity. This paper was also written with a complete disagreement with slavery, and complete disagreement with the attitudes and values that led to the use of slavery. Slavery is an abhorrent practice and so are all attitudes that justify it. Slavery is still present in the world today, both in the sense of forced labour without pay and other definitions like "modern-day slavery" or "human trafficking". Many organizations work to increase awareness of this problem and end the practice of it. Some of these are the United Nations and the International Labour Organization, and others. An organization called "End Slavery Now" say that: "There are an estimated 21 million to 45 million people trapped in some form of slavery today."¹⁴ Slavery was wrong in the past and it is wrong now, and it was an issue then and it has sadly not disappeared from society.

Those who would like to read more about the slavery aspects of the triangular trade or of the WIGC will be disappointed when reading this paper. This thesis is a case study about the physical conditions for the sailors on long-distance merchant ships. Compared to the conditions the slaves lived under, the issues of the sailors seem irrelevant. However, because the original inspiration for this perspective came from an interest in globalizing aspects in small nations before the large-scale globalization that particularly England came to dominate, the conditions for the ship crews that travelled the whole journey on a consciously chosen

¹² Translation: Far from Denmark Images from our Tropical Colonies, Slave Trade and China Voyages

¹³ Eilstrup (1974) p. 8.

¹⁴ End Slavery Now. (2019). Online resource.

route for global trade were chosen as the focus. Slavery is very much a part of this global process, and the removal of people of cultures from one continent to another is more of a globalizing aspect than the lives of the sailors. This deserves whole other studies, and is not done justice in this study. A work that deals with exactly that aspect of globalization is the book “The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness” from 1993 by historian Paul Gilroy, published by Harvard University Press. This book, which also used a phenomenological approach, and many other studies, are more deserving forums for the study of globalization in the context of slavery. Further studies on the interactions between Africans and Danish-Norwegians in the time period are encouraged and would be desirable.

Methodology: Structure of the paper

This paper is structured around two main parts. Firstly, a materialistic investigation with presentation of conditions for crews on board, and secondly, a phenomenological analysis. The first part is split into three chapters, the second part is one chapter that includes the phenomenological analysis and the final analysis. The first part is based around seven central foci or elements, that are separated under individual sub-headings in these three chapters. These seven elements were selected as seven central elements of communication to the sailors of what they were expected to respect of regulations and behaviour, and what restrictions or limitations there were on their freedom.

Communication can naturally be verbal, and direct or indirect, or non-verbal. Because so little is preserved in the original sources from WIGC ships that records verbal communication, this thesis focuses on non-verbal communication. Although this limits the thesis in not having direct witness accounts, it creates an opportunity to investigate the material world and indirect written sources that reflect meaning about life on board. From this, a phenomenological understanding of life from particular points of view can be made. A significant amount of primary source material exists, which makes such a study possible. In the past, a similar approach has been used by Herman Ketting in his historical work “Leven, werk en rebellie aan boord van Oost-Indiëvaarders (1595-1650)”¹⁵ (2002), and by the

¹⁵ Translation: Life, work and rebellion on board East Indiamen (1595-1650)

Spanish historian Pablo E. Perez-Mallaina, who wrote the book “Spain's Men of the Sea: Daily Life on the Indies Fleets in the Sixteenth Century” from 1998. These historians used materialistic approaches, mixed with original written documents, to create vivid accounts of life on board.

Seven elements of the world surrounding the sailors were selected to create perspectives on the large amount of documents that exists. This allowed for selective use of the material. These elements are roles, regulations, space, isolation, freedom of speech, victuals, and leisure opportunities. To illustrate their central place in this paper, these seven elements are presented in the information box below (Table 1). Some of these elements are familiar in secondary literature about life on ships, for instance in Svalesen’s account of *Fredensborg*, and in several of Henning Henningsen’s articles. This paper adds some theoretical and material discussion to these, and relates them specifically to life on WIGC merchant ships. This is discussed along with the secondary sources. The seven elements have been chosen by design, based on studying the conditions for sailors in the WIGC. Conditions for sailors on Danish and Norwegian naval ships, and on Dutch long distance merchant ships, in the 17th and 18th centuries have been a part of informing the choices of these elements. In order to create a critical view on life as a sailor, the choice was made focus on some central limiting factors on the liberty of the sailors. This choice was made in order to illustrate the limitations, but conversely as a result also some freedoms that came with life as a sailor in the WIGC.

Seven central elements
Roles
Regulations
Space
Isolation
Freedom of speech
Leisure opportunities
Victuals

Table 1 Seven central elements concerning life on board that are discussed in this thesis.

Beyond the practical choice of focusing on these aspects, there is some scientific basis for using such elements. Bringing in a sociological concept created in modern times can help focus some aspects of the nature of life on board. The Canadian-American sociologist Erving Goffman included ships as one of the types of *total institutions* in society in his book “Asylums” from 1961. Goffman wrote that “[e]very institution captures something of the time and interest of its members and provides something of a world for them[...].”¹⁶ However, some institutions are more encompassing than others. “Their encompassing or total character is symbolized by the barrier to social intercourse with the outside and to departure that is often built right into the physical plant, such as locked doors, high walls, barbed wire, cliffs, water, forests, or moors.”¹⁷ A WIGC ship is a *total institution* in this sense that Goffman described. His concepts are used as a support for understanding the ship as an institution. A WIGC ship was an institution in Goffman’s terms in the sense that it was “[...] established the better to pursue some worklike task and justifying themselves only on these instrumental grounds[...],”¹⁸ after which Goffman used ships as one of the examples of types. A criticism of Goffman’s work for the relevance of using it in this thesis is that he views institutions in relation to modern society. As such his concepts may not always be transferrable. For instance, he writes that: “A basic social arrangement in modern society is that the individual tends to sleep, play and work in different places, with different co-participants, under different authorities, and without an overall rational plan.”¹⁹ After this, he outlines that in total institutions, “all aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority”.²⁰ The expectations may have been different for those who signed on to sail on WIGC ships. However, aspects of this was relevant on the ships and some of these are useful for describing aspects of life as a sailor, and understanding them from a modern context. There were also *total institutions* within the ship, with barriers to other parts of the ship, not just for the ship as a whole. Goffman’s use of *total institutions*, and his focus on the limitations put on people in some situations, are useful supporting concepts to highlight the nature of the WIGC ships as places.

¹⁶ Goffmann (1961) p. 4.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 5.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 6-7.

²⁰ Ibid.

Literature review and status of research

Introduction

This thesis is split into two main body parts – the materialistic study of the ships and life aboard them, which uses primary and secondary sources, and material culture. Furthermore there is the phenomenological study and the final analysis, which are more analytical and mainly reference the material that has already been presented.

Knowledge of merchant sailors in the time period is spread out in various sources and secondary literature. This thesis delves into the culture and conditions of merchant sailors on Danish long-distance voyages. Circumstantial or contextual information, about other types of ships, is sometimes referenced to create context or provide additional discussion. On this, maritime archaeologist and director of the Norwegian Maritime Museum²¹ for many years, Svein Molaug, wrote in 1989 that:

Seafaring culture has that particularity that it becomes the seafaring nations' common possession. Impulses quickly spread from port to port, and with some modifications we can assume that what defines a ship from one country and life on board in it, will not differ significantly from ships and seafarers' lives in other countries.²²

This means that reference material from different countries can sometimes help understand practices in another country, and some knowledge can at times be transferrable between ship types or countries. This affects the literature review for this thesis, although merchant sailors on WIGC ships are focused on as much as possible in the research portion of the thesis.

²¹ Norsk Sjøfartsmuseum, now Norsk Maritimt Museum (Norwegian Maritime Museum).

²² Molaug (1989) p. 181 “Sjøfartskulturen har det særpreg at den blir sjøfartsnasjonenes felleseie. Impulsene brer seg fort fra havn til havn, og med noen modifikasjoner kan vi gå ut fra at det som preger en skute fra ett land og livet ombord i den, ikke vil skille seg vesentlig fra skuter og sjømannsliv i andre land.”

Secondary literature

Life on board

Concerning merchant sailors, Knut Sprauten and Svein Molaug have written chapters on the topic in the time period, in the book called “Norsk Sjøfart”²³, volume 2, edited by Brit Bergreen, Arne Emil Christensen and Bård Kolltveit, from 1989. The topics they cover include seafaring, trade and life on board. Sprauten for instance discusses the responsibilities of the captain on Norwegian merchant vessels in the 18th century. His discussion of hierarchy on board, plus Molaug’s discussion of various roles on naval ships, are referenced to focus the discussion of these roles on WIGC ships. This work provides relevant contextual historical knowledge that is referenced in several places in this thesis.

Henning Henningsen, for many years the director of the Danish Trade and Seafaring Museum²⁴, wrote numerous articles about life for sailors and officers on Danish ships in the museum’s yearbooks. Several of these are useful for the present thesis. This includes articles such as “HURRA! Om sømandens hilsekikke og honnør til søs”²⁵ from 1989 about greeting customs between ships at sea. His articles “Sømandens lukaf og kaptajnens kahyt Boligforholdene ombord i sejskibenes tid”²⁶ from 1980, and “Sømandens kogebog”²⁷ from 1976 are referenced in the thesis. His article on drinking water “Sømandens drikkelse”²⁸ from 1977 is used to provide perspective on drinking water and resources on board. They are well researched insights into developments on ships of various types from several countries. Some of the articles span several centuries, and therefore only pieces of them can be used for the time period of this thesis. The thorough nature of the research, and the descriptions of trends over time and across countries of origin of ships, make these articles important sources of information on sailor life. By using the knowledge of the different elements of life at sea found in Henningsen’s articles and the other secondary literature, combined with the finds

²³ Translation: Norwegian seafaring

²⁴ In Danish: *Handels- og søfartsmuseet*

²⁵ Translation: HURRA! On the seamen’s greeting customs and honouring at sea

²⁶ Translation: The seaman’s accommodation and the captain’s cabin Living conditions on board in the time of sail ships

²⁷ Translation: The seaman’s cook book

²⁸ Translation: The seaman’s drinks

from primary sources, it is hoped that this thesis can illuminate more of the phenomenological element of sailors in the growing global trade.

Jacob Heinesen wrote a book published in 2017 called “Mutiny in the Danish Atlantic World: Convicts, Sailors and a Dissonant Empire”. A highly relevant aspect of this book is Heinesen’s alluding to a phenomenological understanding of WIGC ships by analysing spaces in relation to sound. Furthermore, Heinesen elaborately points out how low convicts were placed in society. At different times he points out that sailors were put in the same labour category as these convicts. Ole Degn and Erik Gøbel wrote about Danish merchant sailors between 1599 and 1720 in their work “Skuder og kompagnier”²⁹ from 1997. This book discusses aspects of life as a sailor such as social status, food and drink, and how sailors were drafted. This information overlaps at some points with what Sprauten and Molaug write about, and the information from primary sources about merchant sailors.

Leif Svalesen wrote the book “Slaveskipet Fredensborg: og den dansk-norske slavehandelen på 1700-tallet”³⁰ in 1996. *Fredensborg* wrecked off the coast of Norway on the way to her return to Copenhagen, in 1768. This is 47 years after the end of the time period for this thesis, and 13 years after the Danish crown took ownership of the WIGC in 1755. However, there are many similarities with the way the ships were run between 1690 and 1721. In many ways, not that much changed. Svalesen’s work is used as a comparison on some points, to illustrate similarities or to focus certain information.

Maritime archaeologist Edgar Wróblewski wrote a master thesis at the University of Southern Denmark in 2012 where he compared secondary and primary sources about life on Danish navy ships with archaeological finds from shipwrecks. The purpose of the comparison was to create a highly detailed portrait of an average Danish-Norwegian navy sailor. This is a point that Svein Molaug also used in 1989 – he has a sub-chapter in “Norsk Sjøfart” called “Marinarkeologien gir bidrag til historien”³¹. The level of detail, his perspective and the combination of sources used by Wróblewski did, however, add something new to the field.

²⁹ Translation: Ships and companies

³⁰ Translation: The Slave Ship *Fredensborg*: and the Danish-Norwegian slave trade in the 1700s

³¹ Translation: Maritime archaeology contributes to history

Some of his research is mentioned in this thesis. Further works on the navy include Danish historian Jakob Seerup's PhD dissertation on the topic "Søetaten i 1700-tallet, Organisation, personel og dagligdag"³² from 2010. This thesis confirms and elaborates some of the knowledge in Svein Molaug and Edgar Wróblewski's works on the navy.

There are some instances where contextual knowledge from other seafaring countries can be useful. Molaug, Degn & Gøbel and Wróblewski point out how international the sailor culture was, and how influences spread quickly. The work "Het Oost Indisch Avontuur"³³ by Roelof van Gelder from 1997 is used as a reference. Another work is the abovementioned "Leven, werk en rebellie aan boord van Oost-Indiëvaarders (1595-1650)" by Herman Ketting from 2002. These provide information about life on Dutch long-distance merchant ships that sailed out of Europe.

Language

A topic that is explored in this thesis is language. Literacy was mostly for the officers. Officers had to keep books and journals concerning the ship and its mission. These were written in Danish on Danish and Norwegian ships. Chapter 1 in this thesis includes a discussion of language on board. A short discussion includes the work by language historians such as Ernst Håkon Jahr, who studied the closeness of the languages that were on board in the late Middle Ages.³⁴ The developments since then are briefly described through general reference works on the respective language histories. Additionally, the influences of Dutch on especially Norwegian maritime language through long-term seafaring connections are mentioned. This is presented for instance in Sølvi Sogner's work "Og skuta lå i Amsterdam..."³⁵ from 2012.

³² Translation: The Naval Department in the 1700s, Organisation, personnel and everyday life

³³ Translation: The East Indian Adventure

³⁴ Jahr (1995) p. 24

³⁵ Translation: "And the ship lay in Amsterdam..."

Material culture

“Fregatten “Lossen”” by Svein Molaug and Rolf Scheen is the first publication it is natural to mention under this heading. It has limitations for this thesis, but it is used at some points. *Lossen* was published as a result of the discovery of the wreck of the ship in 1967, and the ensuing excavation. The book is split into two parts. First, a historical part based on archival sources. Secondly, it has descriptions of the artefacts from the excavation of the wreck of the ship, which sank in 1717. It is the largest and most significant source of material culture from sail ships in Denmark and Norway in the early 18th century. It has often been used for reference by maritime archaeological excavations from the time period in northern Europe. “Fregatten “Lossen”” is used for supporting material and discussion.

Other maritime archaeological excavations have also contributed to the knowledge of the material culture at sea in the time period. For instance, the wreck of the Swedish three-decker warship *Prinsessan Hedvig Sophia*, which was purposely run aground in the Bay of Kiel in 1715. It was excavated by maritime archaeologists Jens Auer, Thijs Maarleveld, Holger Schweitzer and two groups of students. The publication on the finds and the ship’s structure add to the same subject area as “Fregatten “Lossen””. The fact that *Prinsessan Hedvig Sophia* was a Swedish navy ship, and *Lossen* a Norwegian ship, is a case study for a comparison of maritime material culture between two different countries. The finds collections show many similarities. Influences from different cultures travelled across borders in the maritime sphere. An example of the way *Prinsessan Hedvig Sophia* illustrates a side of the maritime sphere that aides the use of material in this thesis is the following. The ship builder at the Swedish royal wharf in Karlskrona was the son of a British ship builder. It was initially perceived during the post-processing of the excavation that the ship *should* have had a squarely shaped keelson³⁶, because this was the British tradition at the time. The material evidence did not support this, and along with further research, it turned out that *Prinsessan Hedvig Sophia* had a flat keelson. This was just like the *Vasa* from 1628. The *Vasa* had a Dutch master ship builder, and several other Dutch ships had the same technological solution. This was a Dutch cultural influence that was observed, that went against the expectations of

³⁶ The keelson is a lengthwise strengthening structural element that rests on top of the frame timbers in the bottom of a ship.

cultural and technological convention in a ship builder with British heritage.³⁷ This is an example that helps illustrate the international nature of the maritime sphere in the time period. It is useful to study wrecks of various types of ships to gain generalisable knowledge, and study them to find where international elements overlapped. This point is in contradiction to the idea that each navy or merchant fleet had a material culture highly specific to its country or merchant company.

Primary sources

The major primary source in this thesis is the collection of documents concerning Danish voyages to Africa and the Caribbean. This was in a section of the Danish National Archives dedicated to Virgin Islands history. This section is available online for anyone to investigate. These are documents concerning the entire time period the islands that now are the U.S. Virgin Islands were possessions of first the Danish West India and Guinea Company and then of the Danish crown. This section has a sub-section called “The West India and Guinea Company, Board of Directors / Documents concerning voyages to the West Indies and Guinea”. This is where the documents concerning the ships that sailed to Africa and the Caribbean can be found. Documents concerning dozens of departures are collected in this archive. They are collected under ship names and years of departure. The ships made several journeys each. For this thesis, selected departures that were studied more closely than others for certain topics were *Gyldenløve* of 1701 and 1702, *Cronprintz Christian* of 1712, *Haabet Galleij* of 1721, and the “Ship Articles” and the “Orders and instructions” for the framework of life on board. Other departures were studied for various other details or comparison. Based on going through the material, and correspondence with the archive, it was established that ship journals and ships protocols for the time period 1690 – 1721 have not been preserved. Most if not all other ship documents for the departures are present, and it is this that provides primary material for this thesis.

Since the ships and their departures are not always organized under the correct folder headings in the archive, the references to primary sources in the footnotes in this thesis are to

³⁷ Skyaaesen (2012) p. 17

the folder collections, instead of to specific ship names. The folders contain hundreds of scans each, and collections for various departures are among other ship departures in the same folder, but under only one ship name. The references in the text in this thesis to each ship are made to the names of the archival collection. Therefore references to both ship departures of for instance the ship *Gyldenløve* in 1701 and 1702, in the footnotes in this thesis, have the reference “Christianus Qvintus 1702 – 1705”, and with the relevant number of the scanned page within that collection. This is done for all ship names and departures. The only exceptions are for the texts “Ship Articles” and “Orders and Instructions”, which are separate texts and are referenced so many times that they have been given their own entry in the reference list. In this thesis, these are referenced as for instance “Ship Articles Scan 6” in a footnote, even though this document is actually in the archive folder for the ship *Jægeren* from 1690. This should however be clear from the appropriate references in the reference list, where the headings “Ship Articles” and “Orders and Instructions” have individual entries.

The longest single primary source is the diary of Daniel Trosner, a unique and impressive source by a Norwegian sailor on several different Danish naval ships between 1710 and 1714. This diary is used for reference at some points in this thesis. Trosner’s diary is a unique source for at least two reasons. 1) It describes life at sea, on a naval ship, from the point of view of a sailor, the lowest rank an adult man could have on such a ship. Sailors did not usually, or almost ever, keep diaries, as far as is known until now. 2) Every page is illustrated with a series of drawings in the outer margin that illustrate what he is writing about. The limitations of Trosner’s diary for this thesis include that he is on a naval ship instead of a merchant ship, and that he does not write much about what actually goes on on board the ships. He is primarily concerned with the mission of the ship, the geographical location and heading, and breaches of rules and punishments. He is concerned with what he learns about the world around him – *outside* the ship. This is a limitation to its use as a source for life on board. It is however still a useful source at some points. Examples or material from his diary are used in this thesis.

Chapter 1 Roles and language

Introduction

The discussed works by Molaug, Sprauten and Henningsen add to the knowledge of life on board ships in the 17th and early 18th centuries. The aim of this chapter is to understand the professional and social world around the WIGC sailor. It is a goal to interpret the material, professional and social factors around the sailors as communicating meaning, directly and indirectly. A central point is thus to interpret the meaning these aspects had as communication to the sailor of which place he had in the shipboard society. Furthermore, the languages and other forms of communication that were a part of life on WIGC vessels for sailors and officers are explored. These provide information about the ship as a local place and as a place in the international network of maritime trade.

The ships that sailed the seas for the Danish West India and Guinea Company were representatives of the merchants at home in Denmark-Norway. They were also small societies at sea. Lives were lived, fears were faced, lives came to an end. The officers took part in the art of navigation, and their experiences contributed to the international maritime culture. In a reduced way of describing it, their purpose was simple: They brought goods to Africa, bought slaves there, brought them to the Caribbean, bought products from the producers on the islands, and brought the products back to Copenhagen. In the most reduced way possible of looking at it, the ship crews simply picked up the goods. However, much happened in the three to twelve months in between setting out and returning.

Roles and crew

On the ship *Cronprintz Christian*, which left for St. Thomas in 1713, the captain made 24 rigsdaler a month in salary, and the average sailor made around 4,3 rigsdaler.³⁸ Financially, the captain was in other words roughly five times as valuable a resource as a sailor. However, once they boarded the ship, the difference in salary was not what differentiated them as

³⁸ Cronprintz Christian 1712 – 1713 Scan 218.

people or as professionals. Purchasing power in the sense of cash had no effect while on the ship, as there was no money-driven economy on the ship. In fact, most activities that could involve or lead to transactions involving money or exchange of goods between people on the ship were illegal and were supposed to be strictly punished (see sub-heading *Regulations* below). In other words, this means that for the captain to be able to lead the ship, everyone on board had to buy into a “social contract” of life on board. This “social contract” included that roles mattered. Furthermore, since strict and sometimes brutal, or even fatal, punishment was what followed a breach of the rules, that was a further incentive to follow the regulations for shipboard life. A monopoly of violence on behalf of the officers was a threat that kept shipboard hierarchy intact.

Crew roles, regulations for life on board, and sometimes also ship types, were similar in the WIGC to the Danish-Norwegian navy. Svein Molaug’s description of the staffing and hierarchy on Danish-Norwegian naval ships in the 17th century is similar to the role list that is presented below. This is discussed further under the separate sub-heading called *Roles* further below. At the top of the hierarchy on WIGC ships was the ship master. However, more often than not the ships only had a captain, and no ship master. Which roles that were inhabited differed somewhat from ship to ship, depending on the amount of crew, the size of the ship, and some other factors. This will be discussed further below. Table 2, is an example of a richly populated ship for a Danish WIGC ship of the period. It is a list of the roles that existed on *Cronprintz Cristian* from 1713. *Cronprintz Cristian* was heading to Amsterdam for repairs and to recruit soldiers, then to Guinea to drop off soldiers and buy slaves, and then to St. Thomas for trade. The list is split into civilian ship crew and military crew.

Modern English term	Quantity on board
Civilian ship crew:	
Ship master	1x
Captain	1x
First mate	1x
Second mate	1x

3 rd Guard	1x
Assistant/bookkeeper	1x
Constable	1x
Constable's mate	1x
Boatswain	1x
Boatswain's mate	1x
Bottelier	1x
Bottelier's mate	1x
Ship carpenter	1x
Ship carpenter's mate	1x
Cook	1x
Cook's mate	1x
Quartermaster	1x
Cooper	1x
Cooper's mate	1x
Sail maker	1x
Sailor	20x
Other position*	1x
Runner*	3x
Ship boy	5x
Military crew:	
Sergeant	1x
Corporal	1x
First constable	1x

First constable's mate	1x
Other officer*	1x
Soldier	9x

Table 2 Civilian and military crew list for Cronprintz Cristian of 1713.³⁹ The asterisk by runner is because the translation is uncertain, it is translated from the Dutch word *oploper*. The other asterisks mean the original text is not legible.

Beyond this list, a separate document lists the ship as wanting to have a total of three mates and four surgeons, and a later list also adds two more officers.⁴⁰ However, since this is not reflected in the first crew list, the civilian ship crew then can be counted as consisting of 49 people, five of which were young boys. Adding in the 14 military crew, and the total population on board when leaving Amsterdam was 63. As a comparison and point of reference, when historian Knut Sprauten wrote of Norwegian merchant ships in the same period, he explains that on fairly large ships in northwestern Europe there could be a crew of 10 on some vessels, and on the biggest ships somewhat more than 20.⁴¹ However, with the long distance voyagers that left Europe, it was not uncommon that the crews were unusually large. Historian Robert Parthesius outlines that on Dutch merchant ships going to Asia, “[t]he VOC sailed with twice the number of crew than was required for a European cargo carrier.”⁴² The reason for this, on VOC ships, was “[...] to buffer possible losses of crewmembers.”⁴³ Parthesius points out that this was a lesson learned in the late 16th century, when Dutch companies started travelling out of Europe for trade. Leif Svalesen, writing about Fredensborg of 1767, writes that the average loss of life on WIGC voyages was 8% of the population. An even larger number became seriously ill along the way.⁴⁴

Of the ship crew listed in Table 2, everyone who was not a sailor, runner, or ship boy, was an officer or part of the skilled crew. Knut Sprauten points out that there was a hierarchy within the officer group that meant that the captain and the first and second mates, and in this case also the ship master, were above the other officers. Nonetheless, the list shows 20 officers and skilled crew of a civilian ship crew of 49, which is a proportion of almost 50%. Since

³⁹ Cronprintz Christian 1712 – 1713 Scan 106.

⁴⁰ Ibid. Scan 220.

⁴¹ Sprauten (1989) p. 243.

⁴² Parthesius (2010) p. 99.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Svalesen (1996) p. 27.

officers and skilled crew made more money than sailors, this made the ship more expensive than if it was run with a smaller officer staff. When Sprauten presents the types of officers merchant ships had on board, he mentions skipper, first and second mate, a ship carpenter, a boatswain, and a cook.⁴⁵ That is a considerably smaller number of higher positions, being six officers and skilled crew. *Cronprintz Cristian* may have been staffed with so many officers because of the size of the crew, or to handle the slave population they were going to transport. Another reason may be what Parthesius refers to, which was that the long-distance ships were crewed more richly because of the potential losses to disease and malnutrition. One further reason may be that the ship left Denmark-Norway during wartime, so the large officer and crew size may relate to the wish to protect themselves against attack, and to ensure the ship stayed functional in case of losses of crew due to attack. The threat of privateers was high during the war, and the threat of other types of pirates along the way was real.

Roles on board

Perhaps the most clearly apparent aspect of the social dynamics on board is that there were professional roles. This had implications for most aspects of life on board. The roles were in a clearly defined, fairly simple hierarchy, which was based on seafaring culture going centuries back. At the top of the hierarchy was a *ship master*, which in the original Danish language in the Ship Articles (a set of legal instructions with regulations for life on board) was called “Opperhofvedet”⁴⁶, literally translating to *upper head*. However, it translates perhaps better to *overlord*, or *master*. This is similar to what Molaug writes about Danish-Norwegian naval ships, where he outlines that “skipssjefen”, which translates as “ship master”, was the head of the ship.⁴⁷ However, on WIGC ships, this was if there was one on board, which often was not the case. According to Knut Sprauten, on Norwegian merchant ships in the period, the captain was the head of the ship.⁴⁸ Note that *captain* here is used in place of *skipper*. Sprauten uses the Norwegian word “skipper” when he writes in Norwegian, which is the word that also was used in the original Danish documents. Even though *skipper* also exists in English, the

⁴⁵ Sprauten (1989) p. 244.

⁴⁶ Ship Articles Point 1, Sub-point 3, etc. Scan 6, etc.

⁴⁷ Molaug (1989) p. 204.

⁴⁸ Sprauten (1989) p. 244.

modern understanding and more common use of *captain* is the reason why *captain* is used here in place of *skipper*. However, this is further complicated by that in the ship instructions “Orders and Instructions” the WIGC refers to the position called “captain” as the *ship master*. In that text, the *ship master* is called a “captain”, and then there is the “skipper” who is in charge if the ship master is not present.⁴⁹ The phrasing the Danish East India Company used in the Ship Articles (which also applied to the WIGC ships) was “opperhofvedet” and “skipper” to refer to *ship master* and *captain* respectively.⁵⁰ In sum, the original Danish terms “opperhofvedet” and “captain” refer to the same position in various sources, and “skipper” always means the same thing. In this thesis, the term *ship master* is used in place of “opperhofvedet” and “captain”, and the term *captain* is used in place of “skipper”.

The term *ship master* is taken from Perez-Mallaina’s “Spain's Men of the Sea: Daily Life on the Indies Fleets in the Sixteenth Century” from 1998. Perez-Mallaina explored the topic of hierarchy and officer roles on board, and described a position that was fairly common in Europe, but that is less well known than the captain. Molaug describes this too, but only briefly, as the *skipssjef* mentioned above. On the Spanish merchant ships in the 16th century, the ship master was someone who was the owner of the ship, or one of several owners, or one of the main financiers of the trade venture the ship was going on. In Danish or Norwegian terms, inspired by the Dutch term, this may be described as a *reder*, which means a ship owner or shipping investor. The ship master, or the ship masters plural, as described by Perez-Mallaina, were interested in that their expedition was successful, efficient, and wasted as little time and resources as possible. A ship master could decide to go on the voyage himself to ensure these interests were cared for. This position also existed on Dutch ships in the 17th century, as it is referred to in C.G. Brouwer’s book “Al-Mukhā: Profile of a Yemeni Seaport as Sketched by Servants of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), 1614-1640” from 1988, as *commandeur*. The commander on a Dutch merchant ship was in charge of the mission of the ship, and as such commanded what the ship should do and where it should go.⁵¹ The captain in that case became more of a technical officer, who was in charge of the crew and the seamanship-side of making the ship perform the commander’s orders. However, as Sprauten

⁴⁹ Orders and Instructions Point 2, Sub-point 1, etc. Scan 87, etc.

⁵⁰ Ship Articles Point 1, Sub-point 3, etc. Scan 6, etc.

⁵¹ Brouwer (1988) p. 412, 416.

points out, the merchant captains could sometimes also have a share in the ship, which would make him have a position similar to that of a ship master in this sense.⁵²

In this sense, which role the captain had could vary considerably depending on the circumstances. This perspective allows for an exploration of opportunities of how to perform the captain's role. Since the captain had the chance to perform his role in various different ways, this would presumably affect him and the crew in different ways depending on his choices. According to the Ship Articles it was the ship master who primarily was the head of the ship, and as such was in charge of delegating work tasks, responsibilities, and making sure everything was in order. The relationship between a ship master and a captain can raise the critical question of what the captain did on a daily basis when both a ship master and a captain were on a ship. Considering what is known about who performed the other tasks in running the ship below the captain's role, this is an interesting query.

Similarly to Molaug's description of a naval ship, it was the first mate that dealt with navigation and setting course on the WIGC ships.⁵³ A materialistic approach to the material is useful to investigate this further, to provide evidence to back this statement up. From the original documents concerning the WIGC ships, there are inventory lists of which gear on the ship that was the responsibility of the different roles. The lists show which gear belonged to the responsibilities of for instance the first mate and the boatswain. This is the gear that is connected to the sailing performance of the ship. Maintenance of the timber part of the ship was under the responsibility of the ship carpenter, and maintenance of the sails was the responsibility of the sail maker. The Orders and Instructions outline which books and documents need to be kept on the ship. These outline that the captain is in charge of making sure these documents are being kept regularly. However, they also state that the captain may delegate the keeping of books and writing of documents and letters to the first mate, the bookkeeper or another suitable person. The captain just needed to sign them.⁵⁴ Additionally, according to Molaug, on naval or merchant ships, tasks such as keeping track of the ship's

⁵² Sprauten (1989) p. 245

⁵³ Molaug (1989) p. 205.

⁵⁴ Orders and Instructions Point 2, Sub-point 2, Paragraph 2. Point 2, Sub-point 3, Paragraph 2. Etc. Scan 87, etc.

position, speed, direction and the depth below the ship were the responsibilities of the first mate.⁵⁵

Altogether, this means that the captain could, and in most cases was supposed to, delegate all tasks that had to do with running the ship to others who were competent in the specific tasks. This seems to have left the captain as a presence on the ship whose primary role was to be the *leader*, not a worker. He led the crew. As long as no one disturbed the daily running of the ship, the captain was seemingly more of a symbol than a worker. As Sprauten points out: “[t]he captain had the full responsibility for hiring crew who were competent in their tasks.”⁵⁶ With the legal documents supporting his position, the right people in the right positions and with the understood obedience of the crew, a “social contract” of a sort, once he had hired the crew and the ship was equipped, the captain had a supervising role rather than doing hands-on work on the ship. During a normal day’s sail, the captain will in other words have been more of an observer than a worker, and more like a symbol and a presence than a participant. This will however have left a lot of room for how the captain *chose* to behave. In this kind of role, he would have the *choice* to be more of a benign, wiser father-figure, or a heavily involved tyrant, or some other combination of personality and level of involvement. His role really was one that was concerned with getting the best out of people and creating a good environment, and it potentially created a large room for his personality to set the tone on the ship.

The next person down in the hierarchy was the first mate. As mentioned above, it was the first mate’s task to keep track of the ship’s position, it’s speed, direction and the depth below the ship when necessary. The first mate could also be made responsible for keeping the ship journal, where this information was documented. The first mate decided the course and the direction to travel in, unless the captain had a different opinion on this. In this case, they had to bring this up with the ship master, if the ship had a master. If it did not, and the captain and the first mate could not agree on the course and direction, this matter was to be raised in a ship council. The council would then discuss it, and an agreement would be made within the

⁵⁵ Molaug (1989) Pp. 213-214

⁵⁶ Sprauten (1989) p. 246

council.⁵⁷ In other words, it was the task of the first mate to set the course and direction on a daily basis, and the captain would only interfere if he disagreed with this. The Danish term for first mate is *styrmand*, which literally translated means “steering man”. This reflects the nature of his job in a more literal way than the English term *first mate*. The first mate was one of the highest ranking officers on the ship, he ate with the ship master and/or captain in the captain’s cabin, and slept in the officers’ cabin.⁵⁸ The first mate sometimes had a second and third mate below him. It seems likely that a second mate, and possibly third mate, is what is referred to in the text Orders and Instructions as the ‘apprentices’ of the first mate, who may be made to write the ship journal on behalf of the first mate.⁵⁹ The first, second and third mate were in other words a small team working together, cooperating on aspects such as navigation, positioning, observing the environment and the atmosphere, logging their observations on these points in the ship journal, and delegating work and giving orders to make the ship sail.

A further officer role that had to do with the running of the ship was the boatswain, in English usually shortened to “bo’s’un”. The boatswain was one of the experts on the actual boat, or ship, itself. This is reflected in the gear the boatswain was responsible for, which includes hawser lines of various dimensions, other rope of a nearly endless multitude of variety of types and thicknesses, blocks, plates and chains.⁶⁰ This means the boatswain, in addition to helping out the first mate, was a technical officer who needed knowledge of the gear needed to keep the boat afloat and running well. Relatable skilled crew positions to the boatswain were the ship carpenter and the sail maker. Knut Sprauten also mentions the ship carpenter and the boatswain next to each other when listing crew positions on Norwegian merchant ships.⁶¹ The ship carpenter was responsible for what related to repairing the ship, or making new parts for maintenance. He was responsible for a significant amount of equipment himself, such as thousands of wood pieces of various dimensions, such as 80 9x10 inch pieces, 90 8x9 inch pieces, and so on in increasing number by decreasing dimensions down to

⁵⁷ Ship Articles Point 36. Scan 13.

⁵⁸ Christianus Qvintus 1702 – 1705 Scan 22.

⁵⁹ Ibid. Scan 87. “[...] leerlingerni [...]”.

⁶⁰ Ibid. Scans 104 – 105.

⁶¹ Sprauten (1989) p. 244.

2000 2x3 inch pieces. He was also had replacement parts, such as large and small structural knees of oak, oars, and several handfuls of other materials and equipment.⁶²

Some non-sailing civilian crew that came next on the hierarchical ladder were the cook, the assistant/bookkeeper, and the priest. The priest may have had a fairly highly valued role on the WIGC ships, at least valued by the company. In comparison, Sprauten, describing Norwegian merchant ships, does not mention a priest. On Gyldenløve, when it departed in 1701, the priest stayed in the captain's cabin along with the captain and the bookkeeper.⁶³ Religion was seemingly important to the Company, as the "*Ship Articles*" outline as the second point, after the taking of oaths of loyalty to the company, that everyone should be at good behaviour when prayer was held or the word of god was preached morning and evening. This is followed by a series of punishments for disrespecting god in various ways.⁶⁴

When it came to the sailors, their roles were fairly simple. In a reduced way of saying it, they had to make the ship sail. Officers told them what to do. The officers had made decisions on how the ship should sail, and the sailors climbed in the rigging and pulled on ropes to make this happen. Not many sailors were needed to make a ship sail, although this depended on the size of the ship. As mentioned above, Sprauten points out that a total crew of around 10 were needed on a fairly large ship. On the biggest ships travelling within Europe, he points it out to be around 20. Including officers, this does not make many sailors. However, the long distance voyagers of the overseas trade companies were a different story. Ships were crewed with too many sailors, to buffer for losses to illness and malnutrition. For long-distance voyage ships used by the Dutch in Asia in the first half of the 17th century, Parthesius writes the following: "The minimum crew size ranged from less than 10 to 15 for the smaller yachts, and from 30 to 40 for the larger vessels."⁶⁵ These numbers fit fairly well with WIGC ships.

The domain before the mast was the space for sailors. Being confined to this space, being restricted from moving outside the main deck and the lower deck, and having fairly simple

⁶² Christianus Qvintus 1702 – 1705 Scans 108-109.

⁶³ Ibid. Scan 22.

⁶⁴ Ship Articles Point 2, Sub-point 1, etc. Scan 6.

⁶⁵ Parthesius (2010) p. 110

work tasks should not downplay the freedoms of sides of being a sailor. The profession of being a sailor was widely recognized in society. It spawned countless stories and other popular culture products. “*Robinson Crusoe*” by Daniel Defoe was published in 1719, “*A New Voyage Round the World*” by William Dampier was published in 1697, and many other stories that celebrated and glorified life at sea were published even in this time period. And, even though it was written in 1851, long after the sailors in this period were dead and gone, some of what inspired Herman Melville to write the following words in “*Moby Dick*” may have been true for some in the early 18th century as well:

No, when I go to sea, I go to sea as a simple sailor, right before the mast, plumb down into the forecastle, aloft there to the royal mast head. [...] I always go to sea as a sailor, because of the wholesome exercise and pure air of the forecastle deck. For as in this world, head winds are far more prevalent than winds from astern [...], so for the most part the Commodore on the quarter-deck gets his atmosphere at second hand from the sailors on the forecastle. He thinks he breathes it first; but not so.⁶⁶

Melville’s words are poetic, but they capture an enthusiasm and an energy that are inspiring. There were thousands of sailors serving on ships from various countries at all times in this period. Surely some must have felt like Melville’s character, and enjoyed the fresh air, the simple life with simple rules. Sailors got a salary, a place to sleep, food, drink and company, which was better than what some of them left when they signed on for the ships.

However, the possible positive facets of being a sailor are to some extent balanced out by the position they were given in Danish society at times. Danish historian Johan Heinesen, in his book “*Mutiny in the Danish Atlantic World: Convicts, Sailors and a Dissonant Empire*” points out how sailors in the WIGC were placed in the same labour category as convicts. Heinesen makes the point that sailors and soldiers at times were put in the same group in the labour force as convicts for state projects such as those related to construction for armament. This is one more indicator of that the lowest levels of sailors were considered to be among the lowest rungs of society.

⁶⁶ Melville (2001) Pp. 3-4.

Private trading and power relations

Another aspect that underlines the fact that sailors were considered as significantly below the officers, is an investigation into the possibilities for private trade on the colonial voyages. A printed and signed official document for Cronprintz Christian outlines what in the original Danish is known as “føring”, which means duty-free personal trade. Knut Sprauten mentions this concept when describing captains on Norwegian merchant ships in the 18th century. Crews on Norwegian merchant vessels were seemingly allowed to buy a small portion of goods personally when on a trade voyage, without paying the merchant company any duties on this trade. This was an opportunity to make a little more money beside their cash salary. However, what this in reality opened up for was for the high officers to make a vastly disproportionate larger profit on the trade journey than the sailors could. As Sprauten writes: “It was possibly the captains who first and foremost could exploit this opportunity for extra income.”⁶⁷ Any possibility for increased income will presumably have been welcomed by all merchant sailors and officers. In the WIGC, on the way *to* St. Thomas sailors could not bring any goods for private trade. However, a ship master could bring personal trade goods up to a value of 200 rigsdaler, which is more than eight times his monthly salary (24 rigsdaler). A captain could bring up to 100, and a first mate up to 50. On the way back, the high officers could bring the same values back. A lower officer, skilled worker or sailor could then bring duty-free trade goods that were worth up to the value of three months of their salary.⁶⁸ This would be 12,9 rigsdaler for a sailor. This value was presumably appreciated, but as a study of power relations in the Early Modern period, this illustrates how differently people were treated.

As the ship master, the captain and the first mate could bring these values both to and from St. Thomas, it meant they could make profit twice. A ship master could then make 400 rigsdaler if he was completely successful on his private trading. Dividing this by the sailors’ total potential of 12,9 rigsdaler, this means the ship master could make 31 times as much money on private trading than a sailor could. The captain could make 15,5 times as much and the first mate almost 8 times as much as a sailor could. As far as studying in what way

⁶⁷ Sprauten (1989) p. 248.

⁶⁸ Cronprintz Christian 1712 – 1713 Scan 214.

shipboard society was a reflection of power relations in the time period, this illustrates that the WIGC ships reflected a system that opened up for the most well paid employees on the ships to further increase their wealth. In turn, the company restricted the lower officers, skilled workers and the sailors from increasing their financial standing in the same way. An egalitarian system would have divided the total amount of private trade opportunity equally between all shipboard employees. However, the WIGC system strongly favoured giving the comparatively wealthy a significant opportunity to increase their wealth radically compared to the potential for financial gain for those in lower positions.

Languages

Danish was naturally the official language, since the WIGC ships were Danish-Norwegian, even though an official language is technically not stated in the regulations. However, there were also other languages used on board, primarily being Norwegian, but also Dutch, English and possibly German and other languages. There were also other forms of language, or communication, that officers needed to master, such as greeting customs at sea and using the international network of correspondents the WIGC had around Europe. This meant that languages and various forms of communication were aspects of the professional role of being an officer at sea. The following paragraphs explore languages spoken by sailors, and the knowledge of communication that was necessary for officers.

Norwegian language historian Ernst Håkon Jahr explained in 1995 that orally, Danish, Norwegian and the Low German languages such as Dutch, were so close to each other in the late Middle Ages that no language learning was necessary for people from these language backgrounds to be able to speak to each other. German, on the other hand, by the late Middle Ages, had developed to such a different language that speakers of High German did not have the same linguistic relationship with these other languages.⁶⁹ Some changes happened in these languages between the late Middle Ages and the late 17th century. However, as Norwegian historian Sølvi Sogner concluded on the topic, it must be assumed that people from these language cultures could communicate orally without needing significant language

⁶⁹ Jahr (1995) p. 24.

learning.⁷⁰ Norwegian and Danish were fairly close in the 17th century. As Norwegian language historian Egil Børre Johnsen has explained, the spoken language in the lower classes and smaller towns was Norwegian without a written language, which had a grammar more or less the same as present day Norwegian.⁷¹ In the larger towns and cities, this period was the beginning of a process that led to a creoloid spoken language between Norwegian and Danish, with Danish as the written language. In other words, it seems that Danish and a Norwegian with similar grammar to that of the present day were present on the ships. If it was necessary for those who lived in Norwegian cities to speak a creoloid of Danish and Norwegian, then it seems reasonable to conclude that the Norwegians on board WIGC ships spoke a creoloid of Danish and Norwegian to their Danish-speaking colleagues.

Several languages were often present on board. In addition to Danish, most ships had some Norwegians on board. Examples of this are found on *Cronprintz Christian* of 1713, which had a sail maker from Stavanger and eight sailors from Norway⁷², and on *Gyldenløve* of 1701 which had a soldier from Drammen and one from Bergen. There are just some of the examples of this. *Gyldenløve* additionally had a soldier from Scania, which today is in southern Sweden, and has an interesting linguistic history of its own.⁷³ *Cronprintz Christian* had a sailor from Dantzic and a soldier from Hamburg, who it is likely had German as their native language. Based on the names, there may also have been people of other nationalities or linguistic backgrounds on board. From *Gyldenløve* the name of the first mate, Pieter de la Porte, suggests he had a different cultural origin in his family than Scandinavia.⁷⁴ Furthermore, a soldier on the same ship, who is listed as having an additional profession as a sailor, is written down with the name Anthonij Tousantis.⁷⁵ If it is not misspelled, this may also be a person who has a family background from another linguistic culture than Denmark. On *Cronprintz Christian* the ship carpenter's mate was named Abraham de Ridder, which it is possible is not a Danish name.⁷⁶ In a small population such as that on the WIGC ships, people speaking different languages as their primary language, and as such speaking a

⁷⁰ Sogner (2012) p. 17.

⁷¹ Johnsen (1987) p. 49.

⁷² *Cronprintz Christian* 1712 – 1713 Scans 218-219.

⁷³ *Christianus Qvintus* 1702 – 1705 Scan 5.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* Scan 22.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* Scan 5.

⁷⁶ *Cronprintz Christian* 1712 – 1713 Scan 218.

creolisation of Danish and that language, must have been noticeable, and likely affected the social environment on board on some level.

The closeness of Danish, Norwegian and Dutch cultures, in terms of the regularity and depth of their interaction, is beyond doubt in the 17th and early 18th centuries. This is attested by the Norwegian immigrant community in Amsterdam⁷⁷, the regularity of Scandinavian sailors on Dutch ships, the shipping between the countries, and interactions such as that of Dutch ship builders regularly being employed by Danish kings in Denmark and in Norway⁷⁸. Norwegian and Danish sailors that took part in the international sailing and trade communities will have encountered Dutch frequently. On WIGC ships between 1690 and 1721, sailors came into contact with Dutch-speakers either in the Netherlands or in other foreign ports. The documents below are some examples of the presence of Dutch and English on the ships.

Officers' knowledge of languages

It was likely that WIGC ships would be visited by ships from other countries, or go into port in another country. This meant that some of the officers needed to speak, and ideally to be literate, in some other languages. The most useful ones would be Dutch and English since these were the languages of the largest merchant countries in north-western Europe, however, sometimes other languages were also present. First of all, the officers needed to be familiar with the particular written style in Danish. There were certain elements of the formal writing in documents kept on the ships that made the writing style an expression of a particular written culture. There were many different types of documents on board - lists, letters, journals, record books, and other types. However, when foreign merchants loaded goods onto the ship, and listed the inventory of what had been loaded in for instance Dutch, it was necessary for the Danish officers to be able to read this.

Going into port could either be for supplies or in an emergency. *Gyldenløve* of 1701 stopped in London on their way to Africa and the Caribbean. In London, a Dutch-speaking merchant

⁷⁷ Sogner (2012)

⁷⁸ Lemée (2006) Pp. 47-48.

or bookkeeper came on board and wrote down what supplies had been brought on board for the Danish ship. This was dyes of different kinds, some canvas and some other supplies. The inventory of new goods was written down in Dutch, and signed in “Londen”, the Dutch spelling for London, by “Salvo Ennore” and “Henrij Ulken”. It is clear that the inventory is filled in by one of these two, because they signed it, but also because the page begins in Danish in a different handwriting, before the Dutch text in the hand of the person that signed it starts. For *Cronprintz Christian*, which had extensive repairs in the Netherlands, recruited some soldiers there, and waited there to be fully equipped, there is a multitude of pages in Dutch among the ship documents. The ship also sold sugar in Amsterdam on a return trip from St. Thomas, which created dozens of pages of text in Dutch by Dutch notaries, auctioneers or other literate people involved in the transactions.⁷⁹

The WIGC ship *Haabet Galleij* (which has galley in the name, and is described as a galliot here, but is described as a frigate elsewhere) carried a letter of protection written on behalf of the king of Great Britain. The letter was written by the British envoy in Copenhagen, by the name of R. Molesworth. The letter is introduced the following way: “The underwritten Envoy Extraordinary from the King of Great Britain to the Court of Denmarc. To all Admirals, vice Admirals, Captains, Commanders, Gouvernours and All others whom it may concern. Greeting!”⁸⁰ It then goes on to describe that this letter should allow the ship, which he describes as “*the Hope*, a galliot” with Peter Erickson Helsing as “Master”, pass on its voyage “freely and quietly” without any “Hindrance or Molistation what so ever” but instead “all favours aid and asistance.”⁸¹ This letter of passage seems to have been given to the ship in case it would be boarded by a British inspection.

Greetings at sea – another language the officers must master

British ships were known for approaching other ships in the North Sea. As Henning Henningsen writes, British ships in the late 17th century started expanding the tradition of how ships greeted each other at sea. Henningsen writes of a Danish East Indiaman,

⁷⁹ Chronprintz Christian 1712 – 1713 Scans 41 – 75.

⁸⁰ Jægeren 1690 – 1694 Scan 26.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Oldenburg, which in 1672 was on its way out of Skagerrak and into the North Sea. They encountered an English Navy frigate that was carrying an ambassador to a Danish duke. The surgeon on *Oldenburg* wrote the following in his journal to describe the English greeting:

[...] [A]s soon as he saw our Danish flag, he made all his crew come up on deck and climb into the shroud, where after they following English custom with clear voices three times sent us a happy and celebratory shout our way, so our ears tickled, while they waved their hats. Our captain, who was familiar with this maritime custom, had already told our people to greet them in the same way; they climbed up and shouted equally as silly with a clear voice to them, where after one honoured them with a triple firing of the guns. [...] (The ambassador's secretary came aboard to us and was made drunk with Rhine-wine, while they toasted for the English and the Danish king). When he was come over on his ship, his master allowed us to be complimented in the finest with his guns, with kettledrums and trumpets, which we thanked for in the same way.⁸²

In the course of the next decades this type of greeting of other ships at sea became more common and frequent, and it was made mandatory in the Danish Navy to greet ships this way.⁸³ These examples coupled with that ships could be randomly inspected, or may even need favours or help while at sea, meant that having a letter of safe passage such as that given to the ship *Haabet Galleij* could make meetings with English ships at sea easy and friendly. Furthermore, there were more ways of communicating at sea, such as the use of flags and pennants. WIGC ships carried the royal flag and a few other flags and pennants that were used to communicate their identity and their intentions.

Correspondence with Denmark while at sea

Another element of sailing far away from Denmark was that as employees of the WIGC the officers had the benefit of being able to use the WIGC network abroad in case they needed to report anything or in case of emergency. In the instructions to the captain of the ship *Fredericus Qvartus* of 1703 the captain is informed of this network. Because it was likely that his ship was the only one going from Copenhagen to St. Thomas and from the Caribbean back to Copenhagen, this meant that any correspondence between the ship and the directors

⁸² Henningsen (1989) Pp. 33-34. “[...] så snart han så vore danske flag, lod han alle sine folk komme op på dækket, og entre op i vantet, 33 hvorpå de efter engelsk skik med klare stemmer tre gange sendte os et glad og jublende skrig imøde, så det kildede i vore øren, mens de vinkede med hatte og huer. Vor kaptajn, som var kendt med denne søskik, havde allerede befalet vore folk at vise dem den samme ære; de klatrede også op og skreg ligeså tosset med klar stemme til dem, hvorefter man beærede dem med en tredobbelt løsen af kanonerne. [...] (Ambassadørens sekretær kom ombord og blev drukket fuld i rhinskvin, mens de skålede for den engelske og danske konge). Da han var kommet over på sit skib, lod hans herre os komplimentere på det smukkeste med sine kanoner, med pauker og trompeter, hvad vi takkede for på samme måde.”

⁸³ Ibid. p. 34.

had to happen via relays. The directors wanted the captain to write to them in case he took any prizes along the way, meaning captured any enemy ships, pirates or privateers, or if anyone on board got sick or died. To give this information to them, the captain was expected to send letters on passing ships that would get them to locations where they could be passed on to the company's correspondents. The directors outline to the captain that depending on where he needs to address the letters, he should send them to one of the following: in London to Toger Svegerslöff, in Amsterdam to Treschow and Dreijer, in France to Johan Noording and company in Rochelle, in Portugal to the Danish consul, Jochum de Lange in Lisbon, and in Spain to Justus Vorkout Coijman and de Noij in Cadiz.⁸⁴ For a ship travelling to Ghana and onwards to the Caribbean, this network would have meant that he could send a letter with almost any European ship he encountered along the way, as it would be likely that a ship on that route would be going to one of these countries.

⁸⁴ Christianus Qvintus 1702 - 1705 Scan 208.

Chapter 2 Regulations and punishment

Regulations

This chapter deals with the regulations for life on board the ships, gives an analysis of some of the ways these regulations protected the crew and the ship, and how they prevented a ship-board economy and organized gang behaviour on board. Then it discusses some of the most stand-out criminal punishments. This discussion leads into a brief discussion about that the role of WIGC officers included the authority to execute other company employees for some offenses. The chapter also reflects on that the WIGC ships' organization was modelled on that of navy ships, and how they were organized as somewhat in between regular merchant ships and navy ships.

The ship crews were the primary individuals who physically drove Denmark-Norway's participation in the globalization of the world. Leif Eriksen had travelled to North America in the Viking Age, and the Danish-Portuguese expedition led by Hans Pothorst and Diderik Pining in 1476 re-discovered North America. However, it was during the expanding global trade with its origin in the 16th century that started the globalization that has continued to tie different areas of the globe together until today.⁸⁵ From the point of view of the present, the global aspect of the ships is interesting to explore. However, life on the ships were to a large degree an expression of the ship-board culture in the society they travelled from, with a framework that reflected the socioeconomic differences the different people came from. There seems to be a dichotomy between that the ship crews were taking part in an activity that was taking Denmark into the globalizing community that had been growing over the past century, but that life on board was kept so strictly to the hierarchy and division that was defined in the northern European cultural context they travelled from. They travelled from a cultural context that existed in a certain geographical area – but despite the fact that they left this society, and travelled to places where society was organized by different people in a different way, such as the people they bought slaves from in today's Ghana, or to places where there were no people at all, such as some areas on the African or South American

⁸⁵ Eilstrup (1974) p. 19.

coast, or uninhabited Caribbean islands, they chose *not* to abandon the cultural, financial and legal context that had been enforced on them from their home society.

When at sea, it must be assumed that life on board the ships mostly functioned well. However, to make sure that life followed the guidelines the WIGC considered necessary, there was a framework for how the society on board should function. The framework for society on board was the rules and regulations. The regulations were strict, and depending on the offense, could be violent or fatal. An interesting aspect of this is that the regulations suggest that life on board was “local” instead of “global”. While these vessels left Europe and travelled for months at sea, visited different climate zones and sailing to three other continents – Africa, South America and North America (Caribbean) – the regulations took into account that those on board may take part in petty crime against their neighbours, or worse. The society that was envisioned on board was a reflection of the society on ships that sailed in Europe, and was largely modelled on naval ships. So even though these ships were elements of Denmark-Norway taking a growing part in the increasing globalization of the world, the society on board was envisioned to be like a Danish-Norwegian ship-board society sailing in Europe. The people on board were slave traders, and many of them were among the lowest socioeconomic rungs in society. They may have been hard people, not global idealists. At least, the regulations took every precaution to cover for that this might be the case.

Life on board was highly regulated. It was at least on paper. It is not known if the rules were always strictly enforced. Svein Molaug, when writing about the navy, suggests that the prohibition against games on board, which technically was strictly illegal also on WIGC ships, was not policed or kept carefully. He bases this on that fragments of board games were found among the personal belongings of sailors on the wreckage of *Lossen* and on one other ship.⁸⁶ Whether this was the case or not, the rules and regulations were detailed and, in many regards, strict. On Danish WIGC ships, two sets of regulations were especially relevant, that have been mentioned in several places already. These were, firstly, the “Ship Articles”, of 1688, given by King Christian 5. of Denmark-Norway and the Danish East India Company, and, secondly, the “Orders and Instructions for Assistants on the Royal Chartered Danish West Indian and Guinean Company’s Ships” (“Orders and Instructions” for short) of 1698,

⁸⁶ Molaug (1989) p. 207.

written by the Danish West Indian and Guinean Company. These two legal instructions were detailed descriptions of how life on board company ships was supposed to be lived.

Theoretically, these instructions could reveal rich insights into life on board, if it could be taken as that they were followed to the letter. This assumption cannot reasonably be made, however, but they are to an extent a blueprint of how the company *wanted* life on board to be like. There are numerous regulations about life on board that simply are instructions for how things are supposed to be done on board. It seems reasonable to assume that simple directions about daily life often were upheld and followed. For instance, it seems reasonable to assume that point II in the Ship Articles, which says that common prayer should be held every morning and evening, was upheld.⁸⁷ However, point III says that anyone who uses God's name in vain, or spites God, shall be executed, with no mercy.⁸⁸ It seems reasonable to assume that leniency may have been given in some cases regarding this. Killing someone is such a length to go to that even if it says that death should be the punishment, someone may have gotten away with less, as this is a larger step to take than to not hold a common prayer.

Without getting too descriptive, and without entering into aspects that have been covered sufficiently by other secondary literature, some aspects of life on board from the regulations can be illuminated. For instance, according to point IV in the Ship Articles, the captain or the skipper should call a ship council to deal with disciplinary issues on board. As such, the captain or the skipper were not completely authoritative persons that could single-handedly decide the fate of any individual. A ship council consisting of ideally minimum seven, but at least five, other officers took decisions in disciplinary cases.⁸⁹ Another point is that speaking to the whole crew was a privilege that was ruled over by the captain. Once the captain had held a meeting for the whole crew, it was illegal for anyone else to hold an alternative such meeting.⁹⁰ This seems to be to not allow anyone to undermine the authority of the captain. In a similar vein, no one was allowed to leave the ship, or order any boat to be sent away from

⁸⁷ Ship Articles Point 2, Sub-point 1. Scan 6.

⁸⁸ Ibid. Point 3, Sub-point 2. Scan 6.

⁸⁹ Ibid. Point 4, Sub-point 2. Scan 6.

⁹⁰ Ibid. Point 8, Sub-point 1. Scan 7.

the ship if the boats were needed for the sake of business, without approval from the captain.⁹¹

Several of the central points in the regulations seem to indirectly be built around preventing any kind of economy developing within the population on the ship. Playing any game was illegal, unless given permission from the captain, and even with permission, dice or cards were still illegal to use. Giving away, or writing a will that gave away their money or possessions to someone other than their family was not allowed. Selling or giving away their clothes was also illegal.⁹² It was also not legal to take their prescribed liquor out of sight of the person who gave it to them. It must be drunk in front of the bottelier's eyes, or not drunk at all. It could not be given to anyone else, or sold, or requested again later if it was not drunk when offered.⁹³ Any economy involving money or barter was in other words not allowed. All services on the ship were free, including being treated by the surgeon for injury or illness. The surgeon was ordered to treat anyone who needed it, and it is specified that he must do this without gaining any profit from it other than his salary from the company.⁹⁴ Another aspect of "economy" was that no one was allowed to make anyone else do their work for them. Only if it was specifically ordered by the captain, could anyone leave their duty or make someone else do their task for them. These restrictions against any kind of trade of money, objects or actions seem to be systematically set out to avoid exploitation between crew members. If no one would be allowed to sell their clothes, this means there would be no incentive for anyone to 'bully' anyone into doing this. Any gains from gambling were moot, as any debts that were discovered were considered invalid and would thus not have to be paid. And since no one could make anyone do their work for them, this seems like a pre-emptive countermeasure against organized gangs or exploitation of a weaker crew member by any stronger or possibly aggressive crew member. Even starting a disagreement was punishable on the ship.⁹⁵ Exploitation, threats and trading in favours within the crew population were countered by these regulations. Whether this was in place because this was known to happen on the ships, or if this was pre-emptive on the legal side and thought up by

⁹¹ Ship Articles. Point 12. Scan 8.

⁹² Ibid. Point 15. Scan 9.

⁹³ Ibid. Point 26, Sub-point 1. Scan 11.

⁹⁴ Ibid. Point 17, Sub-point 1. Scan 10.

⁹⁵ Ibid. Point 40, Sub-point 1. Scan 13.

those who wrote the regulations, would be interesting to find out from a future research project.

Furthermore, smoking was strictly prohibited anywhere on the ship with the exception of designated smoking areas. No one was allowed to light a fire or light a light, without the direct approval of the captain or from an officer the captain had given authority to give permission for that.⁹⁶ If anyone's clothes got wet, he was to take them off and dry them immediately, with the penalty being to give one Marck to the poor box (where money for the poor was collected on the ship) if he did not do so (unless it was clear that he had not had the opportunity to do dry them).⁹⁷ The ship master, or captain if the above was not on the ship, and the other high officers had to give an oath to the company.⁹⁸ There was a separate oath for the lower officers, sailors and soldiers.⁹⁹

Health, safety, harmony and obedience is the tone of the legislation for life on board. The crew must get along enough to make sure that the ship sails the way it should. Anything that could obstruct that was explicitly illegal. The authority of the captain was absolute, except in circumstances of serious breach of the rules, in which case a ship council ruled. The integrity of each individual crew member was also cared for by the regulations - anything that could be caused by someone bullying anyone into giving away, selling or trading objects or actions was illegal. Contrarily, anyone trying to gain financial advantage by selling objects or actions on the ship were stopped from doing this by the regulations. The regulations maintained the status quo, maintained the hierarchy, and made sure that the safety of the ship, such as by preventing fires, was cared for.

The second set of regulations, the Orders and Instructions", outline specifically which books and documents that needed to be kept on the ship. It was the ship master or captain's responsibility to make sure that these documents were on board, and that the right books were kept. Specifically, the books that needed to be kept were the ship protocol, the ship inventory

⁹⁶ Ship Articles Point 29. Scan 12.

⁹⁷ Ibid. Point 35. Scan 13.

⁹⁸ Ibid. "Eden for Opperhofvedet / Skipperen [...]". Scan 17.

⁹⁹ Ibid. "Deris Eed som eij udi Skibs-raadet kommer [...]". Scan 18.

(a list of every object on board that belonged to or was paid for by the company), the journal, a consumption-book (the goods on board and what was consumed along the way), a crew account book, a register of goods and possessions of those that passed away, and a general roll of those who received salary from the WIGC on behalf of the ship.¹⁰⁰ Various of these books had to be kept by the book keeper, the first mate, or others, and had to be signed by the ship master or the captain. The rest of this 22-pages long book are detailed instructions on exactly how everything should be documented on board while on the voyage.

Criminal offenses

While the general regulations took care of the health and well-being of the crew and the ship itself, they also covered criminal law. The punishment for any wrongdoing could be brutal. The regulations concerning criminality reflect a culture where people were meant to be given only one chance. If they used up that one chance by performing a criminal act, they were punished severely and lost almost every privilege. Someone who was discovered while stealing lost all the salary they were meant to receive from the company, and were to be clapped in iron.¹⁰¹ This means that someone who tried to steal would have wasted the money spent on preparing for the journey, and they wasted the entire time the journey lasted by being clapped in irons and not receiving any money. Interestingly, the Ship Articles also mention that anyone who opened any cask, crate, or other storage container, without the permission of the ship council, would automatically also be considered as a thief and treated as such.¹⁰² This regulation presumably existed because the company was concerned about theft of their own properties, which would then be turned into contraband by the sailors and sold for profit when they returned. Smuggling by sailors happened, and they could be creative and industrious in ways of smuggling. Sailors on the Dutch VOC ship *Rooswijk* which sank in 1740, which had Norwegian sailors among the crew who may have been a part of this, illegally sewed silver coins into the lining of their jackets. They did this to smuggle the coins to Asia, where they could sell the silver at greater profit.¹⁰³ This type of creativity on behalf of sailors to turn a profit was presumably known to some extent by the authorities, and the

¹⁰⁰ Orders and Instructions Point 1. Scan 85.

¹⁰¹ Ship Articles Point 42. Scan 14.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ BBC (2018). Online source.

legislation that is found for the WIGC ships was in place to strike down hard on anyone attempting to steal from the company.

What was worse than theft was to start a fight. Just starting an argument could mean you would have one month's salary taken away from you, and be tied to the mast and beaten with a short rope, or even additionally being clapped in irons and given only water and bread for sustenance.¹⁰⁴ However, within this rule there was another sign of the differences between people on board, and how the regulations protected the hierarchy. This is because starting an argument with a fellow soldier, sailor or lower officer was punished the mentioned way. But saying against the captain was supposed to be punished by death. Anyone who opposed the captain, or whoever was the head of the ship at any moment, was meant to be punished by death with no mercy, according to the regulations.¹⁰⁵ There were different levels of punishment depending on the severity of the fight, if the fight was between commoners or lower officers. Drawing a knife in a fight meant that the person should be dragged to the mast by as many men as necessary, and have the knife he had drawn hammered into his hand. He had to stay tied to the mast until he had managed to draw the knife out of his hand himself.¹⁰⁶ It is not specified if he was allowed to use his other hand to get the knife out.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, he would have two months' wages taken away from him.

The next step of severity of a possible fight led to another level of brutality of punishment. If the person who drew a knife injured someone with the knife, he was to be keelhauled. Keelhauling is an old, infamous form of punishment at sea. Henning Henningsen went into depth about keelhauling and being thrown from the yard-arm in an article from 1956 called "Kølhaling og råspring Et par gamle sømandsstraffe"¹⁰⁸. In this article he mentions overseas trading companies specifically:

While one on regular merchant ships naturally have not punished the crew in the same way as on the navy ships, there are many witness accounts of that one on the company ships, which travelled the long-distance journeys to the East Indies, Africa, America, have used the

¹⁰⁴ Ship Articles Point 40, Sub-point 1. Scan 13.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. Point 41. Scan 14.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. Point 40, Sub-point 2. Scan 13.

¹⁰⁷ Verbally it has been suggested to the author that this punishment also existed in the Netherlands in the time period, and that the other hand was tied to the mast.

¹⁰⁸ Translation: Keelhauling and jumping from the yard arm A pair of old seamen's punishments

punishments. On the big ships with the rough crews there has been a need to rule with an iron hand.¹⁰⁹

Henningsen wrote this about Dutch overseas trading companies, but the same has apparently been the case for Danish company ships. The regulations suggest that criminal punishment, at least on paper, was run similarly to the naval ships.

The brutality of the punishments, even though they are infamous, is striking. The level of brutality seems almost medieval, something that Henningsen corroborates. Henningsen first quotes a certain Rödning from 1794 as describing keelhauling the following way:

Keelhauling a sailor is a life punishment for serious crimes. One ties a rope around the waist of the offender, and this is led under the keel to the opposite side of the ship. Then one weighs him down with a stone, so he does not bump against the keel, let him fall in the water from the large yard arm, where another end of the rope is attached, and pull him down under the ship up on the opposite side. This punishment is often repeated several times, and not rarely the delinquent thus breaks arms and legs or passes away completely.¹¹⁰

Furthermore, Henningsen describes that some of this type of punishments can be traced back at least as far as a ship regulation by Richard the Lionheart in 1189.¹¹¹ In Richard the Lionheart's regulations drawing a knife was to be punished by cutting the hand that held the knife off, but this had been reduced to having the knife hammered through the hand, as seen mentioned above, and as Henningsen also describes. However, there were more similarities with Richard the Lionheart's regulations. If someone killed another person on board a WIGC ship, the perpetrator was to be tied to the dead body and thrown into the sea with the deceased, the same punishment as on Richard the Lionheart's ships.

These regulations were presumably not always followed to their full extent, or their worst possible extent. Henning Henningsen discusses this. He describes the regulations on company ships as being unusually strong for merchant ships. Until 1625, regulations concerning

¹⁰⁹ Henningsen (1956) pp. 93-94. "Mens man på almindelige handelsskibe selvfølgelig ikke har afstraffet besætningen på samme måde som på orlogsskibene, findes der mange vidnesbyrd om, at man på kompagniskibene, der gik på de lange rejser til Ostindien, Afrika, Amerika, har anvendt straffene. På de store skibe med en broget besætning har det været nødvendigt at håndheve en jernhård disiplin."

¹¹⁰ Ibid. p. 89. "At kølhale en matros er en livsstraf for alvorlige forbrydelser. Man binder et reb om livet på forbryderen, og dette føres under kølen op til skibets modsatte side. Så tynger man ham med en sten, så han ikke støder mod kølen, lader ham falde i vandet fra storraen, hvortil den anden ende af tovet er befæstet, og trækker ham ned under skibet op på modsatte side. Denne straf gentages ofte flere gange, og ikke sjældent brækker delinkventen derved arme og ben eller omkommer ovenikøbet derved."

¹¹¹ Ibid. p. 91.

punishments on board were hand written for each individual naval or merchant mission.

Henningsen writes:

The long line of *printed* royal instructions for the fleet are introduced with *Christian IV's ship articles* of 8/5 1625. They seem to also have been used on some merchant ships, maybe the armed merchantmen, and at least on the company ships. Here the punishments are made systematic, which one has thought to be necessary. The repertoire of punishments is not less than the foreign ones, and even though one not exactly always, or actually rather very rarely proceeded according to the law's strongest form, there are though quite a few examples of inhumane punishments for often apparently quite small offenses.¹¹²

It cannot be assumed, in other words, that these brutal and strict regulations regularly were used to their most brutal degree. However, the types of punishments were available at the officers' disposal, with a legal backing, and they were occasionally used.

Officers with a license to kill

On paper, and at times in reality, execution at sea was an element of life on WIGC ships. An element of the roles of officers which according to Henningsen rarely was a reality, was that they may need to be ready to kill either enemies or shipboard criminals. The officers, like the sailors, were employees of a trade company. However, unlike most other people involved in trade, officers that were a part of the ship council had a license to execute other employees of the company for certain offenses. If someone spoke against the captain, disrespected god, or killed someone, the officers were on paper expected to execute this person. This authority to kill other civilians, depending on the offense committed, came from the highest authority in Denmark-Norway, the king. The ship was also heavily armed, with guns of various types equipped to be able to defend the ship against outside enemies such as enemy warships in wartime, privateers, and pirates. This meant that the captain, and in fact everyone on board, had to be willing and able to kill if the moment called for it. While this is not new knowledge in itself, from a phenomenological point of view of life on the ship, this does say something. It means that the officers had to be ready to kill both enemies and civilians if the occasion called for it, which is a further element of the job role of a long distance voyaging merchant

¹¹² Henningsen (1956) p. 109. "Den lange række af trykte kgl. forordninger for flåden indledes med Christian IVs skibsartikler af 8 / 5 1625. De synes også at have været brugt på visse koffardiskibe, måske defensionskibene og i hvert fald på kompagniskibene. Her er afstraffelserne sat i system, hvad man har ment at være nødvendigt. Strafferepertoiret står ikke tilbage for udlandets, og selv om man vel ikke netop altid, ja formentlig endda ret sjældent gik frem efter lovens alleryderste strengthed, er der dog en del eksempler på umenneskelige afstraffelser for tilsyneladende ofte ret ringe forseelser."

ship officer. When describing the roles of people of various stations on board, their tasks in making the ship sail and the crew function well are the main aspects. However, that they may not only have to condemn a colleague to death, but also to do the actions that ended their life, was a real element of being an officer on an overseas merchant ship. This is another element that underlines the position of the WIGC ships as being somewhere in between a regular merchant ship and a navy ship. However, for slave traders, who saw death in large numbers on some trade trips and treated other people as slaves, the value of life may have not have been such a concern.

Chapter 3 Space, freedoms and victuals

Space

Cronprintz Cristian from 1713 is described in the ship documents as a frigate. As a reference for the size of the ship, the Norwegian frigate *Lossen*, built in 1684, was 28,7m long and 7,5m wide.¹¹³ Based on drawings of frigates such as *Raa* from 1709, and a frigate by Rålamb from 1693, it is likely that *Cronprintz Cristian* and similar vessels had a quarter deck, an upper deck, a lower deck and a cargo hold.¹¹⁴ The quarter deck was a half deck at the aft of the ship where officers would be during the day. The main deck was where sailors and soldiers would be. Below the quarter deck was the captain's cabin and officers' quarters. The lower deck is where sailors and soldiers would sleep.¹¹⁵ This is fairly well known in maritime history, which is corroborated by Danish historian Henning Henningsen's statement that: "From ancient times it has been such that the front of the ship has been the common sailors' area, but the aft of the ship was the captain's and the officers' domain, the fine part of the ship."¹¹⁶ Considering the ship was also filled with gear, cargo and provisions, that leaves a fairly small space to fit around 60 people into for months.

Space was limited on the ships, but differences between people were of a higher importance than equality in this regard. The regulations for the WIGC ships clearly stated who was allowed to eat and sleep where. This is reflected in the records, as it is written into the ship documents on the different ships. The bookkeeper on the ship *Gyldenløve*, before departure in 1701, Jacob Aleweijn, wrote in the ship documents who should eat where, and who should sleep where. This made clear that the skipper, the priest and him, the bookkeeper, should sleep in the captain's cabin. The first and second mates and the constable would sleep in the officers' quarters. The remaining officers, and the sailors and soldiers, would sleep below the main deck. Four officers would eat in the captain's cabin, being the skipper, the priest, the bookkeeper, and the first mate, plus the surgeon and a passenger. The second mate and the

¹¹³ Molaug 1983 p. 83.

¹¹⁴ Molaug 1989 p. 186, 203.

¹¹⁵ Christianus Quartus 1702 – 1705 Scan 22-23.

¹¹⁶ Henningsen (1980) p. 17.

constable would eat in the officers' quarters, and the other officers, the sailors and the soldiers should eat on deck.¹¹⁷ The case was similar on the other ships that were destined for Africa and the West Indies. There was limited space, and this space was lessened even more for the sailors due to the exclusive nature of the officers' quarters.

Henning Henningsen wrote an article called "The seaman's accommodation and the captain's cabin Living conditions on board in the time of sail ships" in 1980, where he discussed the aspect of sleeping space at length. One of his primary points in this regard is to point out the limited space and comfort common sailors were afforded. His reasoning behind the article is that he does not mean to criticize:

[...] the conditions in a primitive society, but to communicate the living conditions, which in reality are not that far back from us in time, but that undoubtedly seem to us to belong to a completely different world than our modern, almost unbelievable welfare society.¹¹⁸

His comment that the conditions seem to belong to a completely different world, where one world in comparison seems almost unbelievable, is something that underlines the relevance of investigating this point specifically. Space is an element of life at sea that is essential to understanding the conditions the people involved lived in. Privacy and personal space must have been nearly non-existent factors for people living in these conditions. Privacy, or lack thereof, is also brought up by the Dutch historian Herman Ketting as something sailors did not have.¹¹⁹

Furthermore, Danish historian Jacob Heinesen brings the discussion of space to life. In his book "Mutiny in the Danish Atlantic World: Convicts, Sailors and a Dissonant Empire", he talks about space in a phenomenological sense in his discussion of speech. Heinesen writes that:

[...] I have attempted to think of ships in terms of sound and listening. Life at sea was, for the most part, life in a space which according to philosopher Sir Francis Bacon contained 'nothing to be seen but sky and sea.' Instead, ships were experienced by ear. They were soundscapes of loudness and muteness, the former being a privilege as well as a tool of authorities and the latter

¹¹⁷ Christianus Qvartus 1702 – 1705 Scan 22-23.

¹¹⁸ Henningsen (1980) p. 17 "[...] forholdene i et primitivt samfund, men som en redegørelse for levevilkår, der i virkeligheden ikke ligger så forfærdeligt langt tilbage fra os i tid, men som unægtelig forekommer os at høre til en helt anden verden end vort moderne, næsten uvirkelige velfærdssamfund."

¹¹⁹ Ketting (2002) p. 82

being the reality of the subordinates. In turn, we need to think of the process of listening as different groups and actors construed the noise of others.¹²⁰

This is a further deepening of the understanding of space on board. He has some revealing insights into life at sea, and brings to the discussion the *use* of different spaces. A further central insight he adds concerning space is that: “A ship contained many different spaces for listening, interpretation and narration and each space was tied to different traditions and dynamics.”¹²¹ That different spaces had different traditions is a key insight as well. This insight ties in with Henningsen’s statement of how the front of the ship was the domain of the sailors. Significantly different discourses will have gone on below the deck and in the cabins in the aft of the ship. Sailors filled the voyages with talking and rumours, which Heinesen also suggests.¹²² This added to the freedoms of the sailors, and was potentially dangerous for the officers.

From a materialistic point of view, space was not something the role of sailor merited. Space belonged to rank, and as such belonged to a position that was considered at a higher professional value. For everyone on board, in addition to their cash salary payment, they were given food, drink and sleeping quarters. However, in this employment package space was also an element. The high officer ranks were given more personal space, and the highest ranks the most. This means that space was a desirable commodity. It was a privilege, and came along with rank, money and responsibility. This means it cannot be disregarded as being a cultural element, in which space was not valued. Space had value, and it was only given to those who merited high salaries and large responsibilities. On *Gyldenløve* of 1701, three people were given the captain’s cabin as sleeping quarters. Three others slept in an officer’s cabin. The rest of the crew slept under the main deck.¹²³

Isolation

The ship crew were isolated from the rest of the world for long stretches of time when crossing from Denmark to Ghana, and then to the Caribbean. As Heinesen wrote, quoting Sir

¹²⁰ Heinesen (2017) p. 14

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Christianus Qvartus 1702 – 1705 Scan 22.

Francis Bacon, as cited above, a sail ship was a location where there was ‘nothing’ but sky and sea to see. In the terms of Goffman, the ship had a “barrier to social intercourse with the outside”, which was the water that surrounded the ship. There was also a barrier to departing the ship, which was both the water, which in the middle of the sea would be untraversable, and also the rules imposed on the crew from the high authority of the officers. Who was allowed to leave the ship to visit another ship, or go on land, was regulated by the ship master, the captain or the ship council, according to the Ship Articles.¹²⁴ The sailors were away from their homes, their home societies, and possibly families for months at a time.

Freedom of speech

On paper, sailors did not have freedom of speech. They were highly restricted in how they were allowed to express themselves. It is uncertain to what degree this was policed. According to the Ship Articles, it was illegal to start a disagreement on board, as referenced above. Whoever it may be who started a disagreement or an argument on board, got one month’s salary in penalty. An escalation of such an argument into a physical matter made the punishment worse. Expressing an opinion that was contrary to the ship master, the captain, or whoever at the time was in charge, was an extremely serious crime. Opposing the ruler’s authority in such a way could be punished by death.¹²⁵ Furthermore, the ship master, or the captain, or whoever may be in charge at the time, had the power to make new rules for the ship, if they were considered to be in the company’s or the ship’s best interest. These rules should be followed as seriously as though they were written in the Ship Articles, and anyone who did not respect these rules could be punished in the way the ship council found to be proper.¹²⁶

Religion was an area that restricted freedom of speech. Speaking god’s name in vain or disrespecting god was on paper meant to lead directly to execution.¹²⁷ This fits the definition of having restricted freedom of speech, if voicing an unfavourable opinion would lead to

¹²⁴ Ship Articles Point 12. Scan 8.

¹²⁵ Ibid. Point 41. Scan 14.

¹²⁶ Ibid. Point 45. Scan 14.

¹²⁷ Ibid. Point 3, Sub-point 2. Scan 6.

being killed by the authorities. Swearing or cursing was more leniently punished. If the person who swore or cursed was a member of the ship council, they should pay one rigsdaler to the collection box for the poor. If he was one of the ‘commoners’¹²⁸, he would have to pay less. If this happened a second time by the same person, an officer would have to pay two rigsdaler for the second offence, but a ‘commoner’ would have to be tied to the mast and punished according to the ship council’s preference. Snitching was encouraged, and anyone who heard anyone swear or curse were meant to immediately let it be known to the ship council.¹²⁹

Leisure activities

There was leisure time on the ships. A few different kinds of leisure activities were possible. Some were off the table because of regulations. As mentioned above, playing games was prohibited. However, as also was mentioned further above, Molaug pointed out that this restriction seems occasionally either to have been illegally avoided, or not policed strictly, since fragments of board games have been found on two Danish navy wrecks. According to the Ship Articles for the WIGC, it was possible to get permission from the captain or ship master to play games. However, if this permission was granted it was still illegal to use playing cards or dice, and gambling was either way not allowed.¹³⁰ On navy ships, Molaug explains that it was legal for officers to bring games aboard, and to play, and it was only illegal for them to play if they were gambling for high stakes. Sailors were not allowed to play any games. Anything that was won from a game of high stakes that was discovered was to be paid to the poor box. Interestingly, Molaug even points out that the crew seem to have been tempted to play games while they were working. There is a specific prohibition in the regulations for navy ships that says that when someone is on duty, they should not be visited, and that there should be no gaming.¹³¹ This is different from the WIGC ships, where gaming was prohibited at all times unless given permission by the captain, and gambling always was illegal. On WIGC ships, any winnings from gambling were moot and would not have to be paid. Bringing any kind of game onto a WIGC ship led to one month’s wages being

¹²⁸ The original Danish term used is “*Gemeene*”

¹²⁹ Ship Articles Point 3, Sub-point 3. Scan 6.

¹³⁰ Ibid. Point 14, Sub-points 1, 2. Scan 9.

¹³¹ Molaug (1983) p. 282.

deducted, and being punished by sitting 8 days clapped in irons with only water and bread for nourishment.¹³²

There were more types of activity when the sailors were not on duty. Molaug describes what the material culture suggests about what sailors did in moments off work:

All the shoe lasts and all the small needle houses show that it was common to sew shoes and patch and fix clothes. Some could even do a type of a maritime form of crafts. Many materials and half-done wooden spoons were found on board in *Lossen*. [...] There has as such existed a form of folk art of the sea. This is also attested by the many clay pipe cases made out of wood, decorated with carved caraway. A skein stick with a jointed pine cone on the end and artistically carved rolling balls in the shaft has no business being on a warship.¹³³

Molaug presumably means that this decorated item stands out starkly in context of what would be found among crew belongings. The examples he mentions show that hand crafts, decorating and repairs are activities that were done on ships. Molaug also discusses how it seems likely that Norwegian sailors brought the craft of caraway carving to Norway. This form of craft was apparently originally Frisian. If this means that crafts and repairs were common activities during time between work shifts or between work and sleep for sailors, then it is likely that this also were among spare time activities for WIGC sailors.

Another element of spare time seems to have had to do with talking and storytelling. As mentioned above, Heinesen emphasised the importance of listening as an element of space and sound on the ship. The relatively few and low sounds of the ship and the environment did not fill the soundscape to a large extent. Instead, voices were what filled the silence. They comprised a significant portion of the soundscape. People speaking, conversing or telling stories were major parts of the soundscape and of the social element in the space the sailors lived in.

Some examples of the stories sailors told each other were recorded by the navy sailor Daniel Trosner. Trosner wrote his diary on a regular basis, which is another type of leisure activity that some sailors may have done. Trosner additionally drew to illustrate his diary. Drawing is another activity that more sailors may have done. Trosner is this way an example of three

¹³² Ship Articles Point 14, Sub-point 1. Scan 9.

¹³³ Molaug (1989) p. 209.

different elements of leisure time activities – storytelling, writing, and drawing. A regular feature in Trosner’s diary is that he writes a passage of what is called “passiartis”, after the entry of the events of the day. “Passiartis” is a word that is believed to derive from Dutch, and translates to “it is said that”. This is taken to mean that he has heard others talk about this, or been told this by someone. Trosner was in the navy, and his ship regularly interacted with other ships. This means that his stories and the regularity with which he heard news is most likely not transferrable to conditions on a WIGC ship. However, two brief selected examples from the time period can enrich the perspective of storytelling on board. The first is from the 19th of December 1711:

[T]hat on the warship “Island” there has been so many sick on board since she came to Reden, that they changed 3 times the people on her and there is a ghost in the ship that goes and haunts at night, and as many as see it immediately become sick and die.¹³⁴

The second sample is from the 3rd of May 1712:

[T]hat skipper Hans Nygaard from Fredriksstad has a privateer, and with it one day he took 6 Swedish Spain-farers this summer and brought them in to Fredriksstad – and a skipper in Arendal by the name of Tulle Larssen with a privateer, which was a [hukkert], he fought one time this summer with 6 Swedish Spain-farers, and two had already died, and he fought then with the 3rd and lost his right arm and got many people killed and injured. And then came Peer Flyger to help him, and then they took all six of them.¹³⁵

This seems to be examples of storytelling between people who have either been on different ships before, and share their stories, or have heard stories retold from others who were there, or have heard the stories somewhere else. Trosner does not write down who told him these stories, what situation they were told in, or his reaction or judgement on the stories. He simply wrote the information down. This is either way stories that have reached him from someone else, and examples of sailors sharing stories. Since this is a regular element for Trosner in his diary, this was at least a regular element in the circles he was in on navy ships.

A further element that may have been a leisure activity on the ships is singing. Considering the role that voices had, when looking at the ships from this phenomenological perspective,

¹³⁴ Bjerg 2017A p. 67 “at på orlogsskibet “Island” har [det vært] så [mange] syge om bord siden at hun kom på Reden, at de skiftede 3 gange folk på hende og der er et spøgelse i skibet som går og spøger om natten, og så mange som ser det de bliver straks syge og dør bort”.

¹³⁵ Ibid. p. 99 “[Passiartis:] at skipper Hans Nygaard fra Fredriksstad har en kaper, og med den tog han en dag 6 svenske spaniensfarere i sommer og bragte dem ind til Fredriksstad – Og en skipper i Arendal ved navn Tælle Larssen med en kaper, som var en hukkert, han sloges en gang i sommer med 6 svenske spaniensfarere, og de 2 havde alt strøget for ham, og han sloges da med den 3de og mistede sin højre arm og fik mange folk døde og kvæstede. () Og da kom Peer Flyger ham til hjælp, og så tog de dem alle seks”.

singing is an activity that will have stood out significantly. Sea shanties are a famous element of life on especially British ships from later periods. However, historian Benjamin Roberts, who wrote the book called ‘Sex and Drugs before Rock’n’Roll Youth Culture and Masculinity During Holland’s Golden Age’ pointed out that even in the 1620s to 1640s, in the Netherlands, singing was a common element of expressing masculinity. The migration of Norwegians and Danes to the Netherlands, the commonality of Danish and Norwegian sailors and officers serving on Dutch ships before or in between serving on Danish ships, and overall how influential Dutch maritime traditions and practices were on the same elements in Denmark-Norway, it seems likely that this also entered into Danish-Norwegian shipboard life. Because of the association of singing with maritime life, the greetings customs that were described in Chapter 1 under language, and that singing was an element of expressing masculinity in the Netherlands early in their Golden Age, it seems likely that singing was one of the activities that were used to fill the soundscape also on WIGC ships.

Victuals

The amount of food each sailor would get was prescribed by the WIGC before the journey began. The captain received a “*Spise taxt*”, which roughly translates to a “victual bill”, which prescribed what the crew should get to eat per week. One of the captain’s responsibilities was to provide victuals for the whole ship journey. This is similar to the victual bill on the navy ships, as presented by Molaug from an example from 1731.¹³⁶ The victual bill on the WIGC ships was slightly different. Table 3 is the victual bill from the WIGC ship *Gyldenløve* from 1701. For comparison, Svalesen wrote about *Fredensborg* of 1767 that they had live pigs, chickens, ducks and geese on board.¹³⁷ This would be a significant additional source of fresh food that must have made an outstanding improvement compared to only having the dried and salted meat listed below.

Modern English	Original Danish
4 lbs hard bread, per man per week	4 lb hart bröd, hver Mand ugentlig
1 lb meat per day, when it is meat day, per man	1 lb kiöd dauglig, naar det er Kiöd dag hver

¹³⁶ Molaug (1989) p. 208.

¹³⁷ Svalesen (1996) p. 38.

	Mand
½ lb bacon per day, when it is eating time, per man	½ lb Flesk daglig, naar det skall Spises, hver Mand
½ lb butter per man per week	½ lb Smör hver Mand ugentlig
¼ lb butter per man per week for dipping	¼ lb ditto, hver Mand ugentlig til döppe Smör
1 litre* beer or water, for drinking, per man per day, when they have reached the Spanish Sea	1 potte öll eller vand, til drick for hver Mand daglig naar de ere kommen ij dend Spanske Söe
¼ of 2,4 dl* brandy per day per person, when they drink water, but when they drink beer, no more than half the amount	¼ pæl Brendeviin daglig for hver persohn, naar de dricker vand, men saa lenge de dricker öll gifves ej meere End half parten saa meget
¼ of 2,4 dl* oil per person per week, when they do not get butter	¼ pæll ollie for hver persohn ugentlig, naar ej Smör gifves
½ of 2,4 dl* vinegar per person per week	½ pæll Edige for hver persohn ugentlig
With cereals, peas, salted fish shall be provided after the ship master or the ship council's preference	Med grijn, Erter, oc Stockfisk, skall for holdis eftter opperhofdens eller Skiibs Raadets got befindende.
Boatswain, constable, cook, bottelier, and those who eat at the bottelier's, receive double ration of beer, drink, water, brandy, butter, oil, meat, bacon, and when someone is sick they receive no ration, but receive food and drink according to the orders of the ship council.	Forbaads Mand, Constabel, kock, Botteler, oc de som Spiser hos Botteleren, bekommer doppelt Ranson, af öll, dricke, vand, Brendeviin, Smör, ollie, Kiöd, flesk, og naar nogen Siug er, bekommer hand Ingen Ranson, men da gifves mad oc dricke efter Skiibs Raadets ordner.
Dining in the captain's cabin shall be done after ability and reasonably. Custom according to the ship master or the ship council's preferences.	Udij Cajutten skall spises eftter menage oc billig. Sed af Opperhofdens eller Skiibs Raadets gott findende.

Table 3 Victual bill for the WIGC ship *Gyldenløve* in 1701.¹³⁸ *The asterisk means approximation of amount, based on the encyclopedic Det Store Norske Leksikon.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Christianus Qvintus 1702 – 1705 Scan 11.

¹³⁹ Hofstad (2018).

According to Knut Sprauten, based on sources concerning Norwegian merchant ships in the 18th century, sailors got a solid coverage of caloric needs. They received around 6000 kcal per 24-hour period.¹⁴⁰ The majority of this calorie intake came from butter, bread, porridge, fish and beer. Sprauten writes the regular consumption of beer per person on a ship was around three liters per 24-hour period. The victual bill for Gyldenløve of 1701 suggests the amount was less on that ship. This may have been because of the long duration of the journey, meaning usage of resources had to be spread out over a longer period of time. Sprauten claims this beer consumption was “easily understandable” because of how salted the meat was.¹⁴¹ Molaug also mentions the intake of alcoholic beverages on navy ships.¹⁴² However, neither of them expand on the topic of consumption of alcohol. Considering that the entire crew may have consumed around three litres of beer per day, and some spirits, with the officers having the opportunity of consuming twice that amount, it is a relevant aspect of both a materialistic and a phenomenological investigation of shipboard life. Everyone was to some extent under the influence of alcohol. However, according to Henning Henningsen, ship beer was ‘thin’, and strong alcohol was rarely present. According to Henningsen, the beer the sailors received was of a strength of approximately 1-1,5% level of alcohol.¹⁴³ Spirits were introduced as a regular aspect on Danish naval ships in 1711¹⁴⁴ apparently, but on WIGC ships it dates back at least to 1701, and according to Henningsen on merchant ships since the 17th century.¹⁴⁵

The level of intoxication on board was thus seemingly not very high, especially because the consumption was spread out over the day, and was mixed in with food consumption and at times hard work. Intoxication was an aspect of life on board, however. Drunkenness on board was strictly illegal, though. Anyone who was seen drunk were fined one month’s wages, according to the Ship Articles. If he was a ‘commoner’, he was fined according to the size of his salary, and could also be punished further, according to the ship council’s preference.¹⁴⁶ To prevent this, the rules prohibited anyone from taking spirits, wine or “arrach” twice.

¹⁴⁰ Sprauten (1989) p. 248.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Molaug (1989) p. 209.

¹⁴³ Henningsen (1977) p. 35.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 42

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 41.

¹⁴⁶ Ship Articles Point 27. Scan 11.

Taking one's ration twice meant one month's wages in penalty, and sitting eight days imprisoned with nothing but water and bread.¹⁴⁷ Henningsen does bring up that there frequently was refusal of strong alcoholic drinks on board among sailors. From 1752 on, sailors on Danish ships that did not want brandy on the journey were given a monetary compensation for not using this resource. This suggests the resistance to the practice had occurred for some time leading up to this.

The amounts of alcohol that were brought on board were considerable. By using the definitions of measurements for the time period found in the Norwegian encyclopaedia *Det Store Norske Leksikon*, this can be calculated. Liquids were transported in casks that were called "oxehofder", which literally translated means "ox heads", a type of cask that in English is called a hogshead. In the 17th and 18th century Norwegian and Dutch hogsheads were both 232 litres.¹⁴⁸ The ship *Gyldenløve* of 1702 carried 30 hogsheads of ship beer, 4 "barrels"¹⁴⁹ of "4 dre" beer, and 4 "barrels" of "3 dre" beer. The meaning of "4 dre" and "3 dre" seem unclear. However, calculating 232 litres per hogshead, the ship carried nearly 7000 litres of beer. However, it seems that on top of this, the cooper was made responsible for acquiring 30 hogsheads of just "beer". It is difficult to be certain, but it does seem that the ship acquired 30 hogsheads of beer in addition to the ship beer. This would mean that the ship carried nearly 14000 litres of beer when leaving Copenhagen. For a 5 month journey, this means a potential consumption of 93 litres of beer per day. If the population is considered to be a hypothetical 50 people who consumed beer every day, this means 1,8 litres of beer per day per person. This is still less than what Sprauten claimed Norwegian merchant sailors drank daily. There was also one hogshead, so 232 litres, of French wine. Furthermore there were three casks of the size called "anchor", which literally translated means "anchor", of "fransk Brendeviin", meaning "French brandy" or, literally, "French spirits".¹⁵⁰ One anchor was approximately 38,6 litres, which means a total of about 116 litres of spirits.¹⁵¹ The potential for consumption of alcohol was noteworthy. Additionally, 30 hogsheads of water were brought on board, 5000 lb of hard bread, 604 lb soft bread, 4 hogsheads of bacon, and much more.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ Ship Articles Point 26, Sub-point 2. Scan 11.

¹⁴⁸ Hofstad (2017).

¹⁴⁹ The original Danish word used is "*tønder*", which translates to "barrel". This may be unspecific in both English and Danish, unlike hogshead, which is a specific type

¹⁵⁰ Christianus Qvintus 1702 – 1705 Scan 110.

¹⁵¹ Hofstad (2017).

¹⁵² Christianus Qvintus 1702 – 1705 Scan 110.

An additional note on the food and drink on board, especially from the point of view of a phenomenological understanding of the life of a sailor, is that the food and the water were rarely considered to be good. Sprauten comments on how salted the meat was, and the need to wash it down with large amounts of liquids. Molaug, about the navy, writes that “complaining “inappropriately”” about the food was strictly punished.¹⁵³ However, more than this, Henning Henningsen wrote an article about the food on sail ships called “*The seaman’s cook book*”.¹⁵⁴ The general conclusion about food on ships by Henningsen is that it was generally not appreciated. The food was salty, monotonous and limited in variety.

A relevant point, which relates to the consumption of beer, was that water often was bad. Keeping enough fresh water on board was always a central concern, and keeping the quality of it to a standard at which it did not make the sailors sick was an additional point of difficulty. Apparently, the water in Copenhagen, at least in the 1760s, was known for being particularly good.¹⁵⁵ Water was kept in casks of various types of wood. As Henningsen writes, there was an awareness of that the wood affected the drinking water. Various means of impregnation of the wood were used to try to prevent mold affecting the water.¹⁵⁶ According to Henningsen, it could hardly be avoided that insects, larvae, and other small animals, plankton and such went into the drinking water. If the cask was opened some while after it had been filled, these organisms would have died, and may have made the water go bad. There could be algae, dead small animals or dead fish. The wood in the casks reacted chemically with the water and strengthened the detrimental effects of this. Henningsen writes:

The old stories of sailing are full of shocking stories of this. [...] Up to a third of the cask could be filled with impurities. It stank like a cadaver, urine, like rotten eggs, so it was necessary to hold your nose when drinking it, and preferably do it in the dark so one could not see its unappetizing condition. One often had to sieve the thick things with the teeth, and the taste stayed in the mouth for a long time, and caused dry heaving.¹⁵⁷

Seeing as this technology and method of procuring and storing drinking water remained largely unchanged for centuries, it is certain that securing safe and palatable drinking water

¹⁵³ Molaug (1989) p. 208.

¹⁵⁴ Henningsen (1976).

¹⁵⁵ Svalesen (1996) p. 38.

¹⁵⁶ Henningsen (1977) p. 12.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 20.

was a concern for WIGC ships too. These stories are indeed shocking, as he calls them, and give an impression of a terrifying aspect of living on sail ships for long periods of time. It also puts into perspective why the beer would be highly preferable for the sailors to drink while on board.

The regulations for the WIGC ships reflect the challenges with the poor quality of food and water. It was illegal to throw victuals overboard with the reason of it being bad except with the permission of the ship master or whoever was the highest authority on board at the time. Only the ship council was entitled to make a judgement on whether food or drink was gone bad or not, and thus whether it should be eaten or drunk.¹⁵⁸ This seems to reflect a need to protect the provisions from being thrown out by sailors who thought it was so bad that they did not want to eat or drink it.

For WIGC ships, this also seems to be reflected in the victual bill. The victual bill in Table 3 above shows that beer was not an option for the sailors until they reached ‘The Spanish Sea’, presumably being the sea off the coast of the Iberian peninsula. This may have been to ensure that drinking water was drunk early on. The drinking water would be freshest early on in the journey and would only get worse the longer it would stand, and especially in warmer climates. The policy with waiting to provide beer until reaching ‘the Spanish Sea’, and drinking fresh water until then, may as been a mechanism for timing when the fresh water would be drunk.

Further sociology of life on board

Some further discussion on life on board can be helpful in setting life on board in perspective. Johan Heinesen brings up several useful discussions in his 2017 book about life in the confined space of the ship. To continue with the perspectives of Erving Goffman in understanding the WIGC ship not only as a place of work, or a temporary place of residence, but as a total institution, the following discussion puts these aspects into perspective.

¹⁵⁸ Ship Articles Point 28. Scan 11-12.

Goffman wrote of *total institutions* that they break down spheres of life that are normally separate, because the total institutions are more encompassing than other institutions in society. One of its characteristics is that “[...] all aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority.”¹⁵⁹ In the modern sociological understanding of institutions, ships in around the turn of the century around 1700 were definitely total institutions. Goffman’s is a fitting description of a ship at sea. For sailors, the “place” they were afforded was even more limited than the limitation of the ship out at sea – their area of the ship was only the fore of the ship, namely the main deck and the lower deck. Several other rooms and areas of the ship were off limits to them. They were confined to this space, alongside each other, under the authority of the officers. The nature of the ship as a total institution is understood further by the second and third aspects, which are that:

[...] each phase of the member’s daily activity is carried on in the immediate company of a large batch of others, all of whom are treated alike and required to do the same thing together. Third, all phases of the day’s activities are tightly scheduled, with one activity leading at a prearranged time into the next, the whole sequence of activities being imposed from above by a system of explicit rulings and a body of officials.¹⁶⁰

These are descriptors that fit in. The point of using the perspective of total institutions is similar in understanding more about WIGC ships as it was for Goffman – the implications on the institution of handling whole blocks of people. The organization of the officials, and the production of the formal rules for life and work on board, only make sense when it is seen as a means to organize and control blocks of people that are treated similarly.

This need to handle blocks of people who are treated similarly makes sense when looking at the history of the maritime sphere – sailors and crews were drafted, dismissed, and new crews were drafted again. For the long distance voyagers, there is the added element of the high mortality of the sailors. For the sake of the efficiency of the ships, and the stability of performance of the crews, it can be understood why such a fluid and changing population was attempted to be handled as a block. However, this must have, and did, have implications for those who were individuals within these blocks. Some of the implications of these mechanisms were, in Goffman’s description, that:

When persons are moved in blocks, they can be supervised by personnel whose chief activity is not guidance or periodic inspection [...] but rather surveillance – a seeing to it that everyone does what he has been clearly told is required of him, under conditions where one person’s infraction

¹⁵⁹ Goffman (1961) p. 6

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

is likely to stand out in relief against the visible, constantly examined compliance of the others.¹⁶¹

This is certainly one possible outcome of the hierarchical system on the WIGC ships. This type of implication is indeed one that Molaug suggests about the similarly organized naval ships – he describes the captain’s role as that “[...] the captain should make sure that all regulations were followed. [...] The captain had the ultimate responsibility for good order on board.”¹⁶² While this role can be non-confrontational or confrontational, and warm and welcoming or hostile, it is a system that is organized exactly the way Goffman describes the total institution in this regard.

There are further central similarities that help understand the social dynamics within the WIGC ships as total institutions. Goffman writes that:

In total institutions there is a basic split between a large managed group, conveniently called inmates, and a small supervisory staff. Inmates typically live in the institution and have restricted contact with the world outside the walls; staff often operate on an eight hour day and are socially integrated into the outside world. Each grouping tends to conceive of the other in terms of narrow hostile stereotypes, staff often seeing inmates as bitter, secretive, and untrustworthy, while inmates often see staff as condescending, highhanded, and mean. Staff tend to feel superior and righteous; inmates tend, in some ways at least, to feel inferior, weak, blameworthy, and guilty.¹⁶³

Not all of this fits. The officers did not most of the time have more contact with the outside world than the sailors. However, when near land, or near another ship, it was the officers that decided who could leave the ship to go those places. But the officers and skilled crews worked with the sailors. They were dependent on at least having reasonable working relationships. The dynamics between ruling elites and managed blocks of people is put in focus by this concept. As such, the WIGC ships as total institutions functioned in many ways, but also created potential problematic mechanisms that could hav exploded in dangerous ways.

A further sociological approach that is useful for putting another element into focus for a phenomenological analysis is semiotics. Semiotics is the study of visual symbols as communication of meaning. A famous semiotician is Umberto Eco, who in addition to his work as a professor of semiotics has written best-selling novels such as *The Name of the*

¹⁶¹ Goffman (1961) p. 7.

¹⁶² Molaug (1989) p. 205.

¹⁶³ Goffman (1961) p. 7.

Rose. Another Italian semiotician called Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, wrote the following about how semioticians view non-verbal communication:

A man who walks along the road without in the least paying attention to what he is doing is never a mere body moving in space and time: he is a man dressed in a certain way, who is walking in a certain way along a certain road, and so forth. With all the specifications he bears and which surround him, he cannot avoid communicating to an observer a large amount of information about himself and about the social group to which he belongs.¹⁶⁴

In this vein, clothing on board could be a form of communication. In a time and place where the lowest level sailors were dressed in low-cost clothes of low quality and were all dressed in a fairly similar, recognizable style, a man with a dashing hat, a coloured, fancy coat and expensive boots would have stood out. As such, money spent on clothing was an expression of difference. The officers had the financial means to look different. As a result, it is likely they did dress differently. Pictorial and material sources from the navy has made historians and archaeologists conclude that this was the case for naval officers (Molaug, Wróblewski). There was no requirement for uniforms in the navy, according to Molaug. Since many of the sailors in the navy were recruited from the merchant fleet, it is likely that clothing styles was one aspect that was shared among sailors on these types of ships. Typical clothing of sailors on Dutch merchant ships indicate that the clothing trends were similar on Dutch merchant ships, including on ships leaving Europe, as it was on Danish navy ships.¹⁶⁵ Wróblewski's study of the material and historical sources of Danish-Norwegian navy sailors strongly suggests that sailor clothing was a cultural and financial element that was similar across ship types and nations in western Europe around the year 1700.

Sailors and officers did not have uniforms, even in the navy. According to Molaug, when writing about the excavation of *Lossen*, “there have not been uniforms, only the uniformity that fashion and habit create.”¹⁶⁶ He elaborates about clothing in the Danish-Norwegian navy, basing his comments on observations from Trosner's journal:

Here we see that the people are equipped with wide pants, held together around the waist with a belt and tightened below the knees. They have shirts. Some wear short, fairly tight jackets, nearly peacoats, others have figure-following knee-length coats. It is interesting that Trosner has drawn a copious amount of buttons on the coats. It is typical of the early 1700s that buttons are used in excess both to hold the coats together and for decoration above the pockets and to make the joints hang together. Most of them had shoes and long stockings. The officers had high boots. They also have a vest under the coat. When the sailors are not bare-

¹⁶⁴ Rossi-Landi 1992 p. 32

¹⁶⁵ Ketting (2002) p. 77.

¹⁶⁶ Molaug (1983) p. 215

headed, they have broad-brimmed hats on them. The officers' hats are fancier with feathers or other flamboyance on them.¹⁶⁷

Clothing was a visual separator that indicated rank. Being able to afford better clothing was a real financial issue for those who served on ships. For those who could afford it, it was visible that they were of a higher rank than the others around them. Molaug explains that for the sailors in the Danish-Norwegian navy, “salaries were not high, and even the small payout the sailors were entitled to, it was difficult to get paid out.”¹⁶⁸ He uses the example of sea-boots, which was not found on *Lossen*. Molaug points out that such boots were valuable, which was one of the reasons why sailors did not get them. Clothing was an indicator of wealth and status. An attempt on WIGC ships to protect this element of sailors' lives was that sailors were explicitly not allowed to sell or give away their clothes. This could also prevent theft, because if one sailor was noticed as one day wearing another sailor's clothes, the society around him would know that transfer of clothes between people was not allowed and that this person had perpetrated a crime.

¹⁶⁷ Molaug (1983) p. 215 “Her ser vi at folkene er utstyrt med vide bukser, holdt sammen om livet med belte og tilstrammet under knærne. De har skjorter. Enkelte bærer korte, forholdsvis trange jakker, nærmest pjekkerter, andre har figurinnsvingte kneside frakker. Der er interessant at Trosner har tegnet en mengde knapper på frakkene. Det er typisk for det tidlige 1700-tallet at det brukes knapper i unødige mengder både til å holde frakkene sammen og til pynt over lommer og for å hekte opp skjøtene. De[] fleste hadde sko og lange strømper. Offiserene har høye støvler. De har også vest under frakken. Når matrosene ikke er barhodet, har de bredbremmede hatter på seg. Offiserenes hatter er flottene med fjær eller annen stas på.”

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

A phenomenological view and final analysis

Introduction

As an introduction to the final analysis of this thesis, the phenomenological view is explored. As mentioned in the ‘Theory and methodology’ section, a phenomenological view has been chosen in order to highlight, or bring to light, aspects of the social dynamics on board that are not apparent from individual witness accounts, or the other individual sources by themselves. Putting them together, and analyzing life in the role of the sailor with a phenomenological perspective, should give new information or emphasize aspects that otherwise would not be readily apparent from the material. The exploration below highlights time as an element of life on board, the ‘local’ nature of life on board despite the ships’ global voyages, aspects of social dynamics that are derived from sound and space for sailors, and some more. The purpose of this exploration is to gain a deeper understanding of the WIGC ship as a place, with specific emphasis on this for the sailors. The purpose of it is also to bring the place to life, to enter this into the historical narrative of the long-distance merchant ships.

Non-event and time

Especially focusing on the non-event is useful a useful tool for the phenomenological approach. Meals, work tasks, going to battle stations and so on were events that had specific rituals and ways of going about things, and required an urgency that was a break with the regular tempo. The non-event, when a routine work task was being performed, or in fact nothing was happening, is useful as an investigative tool for illustrating the ship as a place beyond an event. More often than not, life on board was likely to be in the status quo of regularity than to be broken up by events such as meals, changing of shifts, and so on. This means that time is also an element of the phenomenological analysis that should be taken into consideration. Perception of time will have been a central aspect of life on board.

When the crews boarded the WIGC ships, they knew they would be there for at least a quarter of a year, maybe as much as a year depending on circumstances. Time will have affected culture and behavior. Non-events must have been longer than events on board. Only studying the material world and events would thus be a limitation to understanding and presenting the lives of sailors. Time, in the sense of being in considerable quantity, may have been one of the defining aspects of being a sailor on a long-distance merchant voyage. Time is also a central element in putting into perspective why elements such as sound, space, and sight would be central aspects for sailors. The people on board knew they would be in that limited space for a long time, which would mean that they could expect an immersion into the natural, physical and social environment. It would be unavoidable in such a long period of time, in such a limited space, with the amount of people that sailed on the WIGC ships. Therefore, it must have been an overarching element that also affected the social dynamics on board. Time, as an element of social dynamics, may be used in different ways. In a positive sense it may allow people to get to know each other better and break down social barriers to interaction over time. In a negative sense, it can be used as a tool of fear. Someone who threatens a weaker person by making an open threat of that sometime soon, something horrible is going to happen to the weaker person, makes use of time as an element of terror. Even if nothing would happen, the terror imbued in the victim may make their life miserable. In a space such as the WIGC ships, where no one could leave, time will have been a major factor in social life for various such reasons. To use a simile, just as Albert Einstein concluded that gravity must be a property of both space and time, so must life on board have been a property of both space and time. If something would pass soon, it can be dismissed. However, the WIGC ship voyages lasted somewhere between four and twelve months, depending on circumstances. In such a long time frame, dismissing something would be harder, and immersion into the elements and the nature of ship-board life may have been natural.

Time may also have affected the tempo of work and life on board. Many WIGC ships sailed with large crew sizes compared to the size of the ship. There was a large amount of time between their destinations. The amount of work tasks, maintenance work, practicing drills and learning skills were likely not large for a ship of the size of the WIGC ships for that amount of crew. This means that the urgency required for each individual in their tasks in their work hours likely was not great. For those who were not on their shift, this may have

had an even larger place in their lives. Since games, drinking alcohol and eating were either illegal or restricted to certain times and places, the urgency of the activities in their spare time cannot have been great. Most tasks and activities on WIGC ships were likely affected by that there would be very few moments when they would need to be in a hurry to do anything. Events, such as meals, arguments, visits from another ship, or going into port, likely changed this dramatically as they required urgency to make something happen at a specific time. This made the change in tempo an element of life on board, where there were relatively speaking short situations where urgency was required, which can be compared to the backdrop of the long periods of time where little or no urgency was required. Tempo, urgency and lack thereof and perception of time were thus central elements that defined life in the roles on a WIGC ship. A disclaimer to this analysis is that when slaves were on board, the population of the ship was so dramatically much larger, and of such a potentially explosive nature because of their imprisonment, that time may have been filled with more of a sense of urgency or tension.

Sound and social life

A phenomenological view investigates a place with taking into account the material world as it was in particular conditions at a particular time, to emphasize many sensory aspects of the place. Some of the issues brought up here are not necessarily specific to WIGC ships between 1690 and 1721. Because they altogether help form the understanding of the WIGC ships as a place, and this together can be analysed in perspective of WIGC ships from 1690 to 1721, it is included. For instance, as cited earlier in this thesis, Johan Heinesen brings up a phenomenological perspective in his book. He brings up the perspective that sail ships primarily were experienced by ear. A sailor would only hear a few things while sailing at sea. Only a few sources of sound existed. A sailor standing on deck likely heard only a few things - the wind, the creaking of wood in the ship's structure, the hull hitting the water and water rushing softly along the bow of the ship, maybe flapping of sails now and then, and voices talking or singing. This can be experienced in person also today. Walking a site is a way of beginning a phenomenological investigation of a historical place. Then knowledge of other elements of the place in the time period may be added in. Walking a historical sail ship can emphasise what Heinesen brought up. The ship is quiet. The wooden structure dominates the

soundscape, in that it absorbs sound. The other sound that is heard is the soft sound of water. If the ship is placed in or near water, away from traffic and other sound pollution, the phenomenological experience of a ship by ear becomes apparent. Standing on deck is somewhat similar to being in a forest – the fresh air fills the nose, and the wooden structure absorbs sounds like trees in a forest, which can make the place seem quiet even if it is filled with people. There is a certain heaviness and density to the ship, which comparative ship building materials like plastic, metal or fibreglass usually do not have. That the materials are organic add to the sensation of being in nature.

On the WIGC ships at sea, the sounds of the natural elements, and the organic structure being pushed along through these, would be soft sounds. Voices would be the stronger sounds. The example sailor would hear sailors talk between them. If the ship was sailing well, not everyone on deck would have something to do. Voices could be coming from people standing around, sitting below deck, or people talking as they performed the tasks assigned to them. Boys, young and old men talk in many different ways, some softly and with few words and others loudly, with many words and a lot of energy. This mixture of voices and ways of talking would be dominating what the sailor would hear for months to come. The voices would be speaking in different dialects of Danish, a creoloid of Danish and Norwegian, or different dialects of Norwegian. Now and then it could be a creoloid of Danish and German, or Danish and Dutch. If a foreign merchant or officer was visiting the ship's officers, it may be Dutch, English or another language. Naturally, the slave population that was on board between Ghana and St. Thomas made the linguistic presence much more varied, and global. One or more languages within the slave population will have filled the soundscape, especially because the slave population was so large compared to that of the crew. Suddenly this meant languages from different continents existed alongside each other, and the 500 or so voices of the slaves must have been a major, strong element on board. This must certainly have defined spaces, because these voices presumably expressed anger, accusation and pain.

Just within the crew population, the sailor had to be able to tolerate the voices of crewmembers he heard, otherwise it might be a tense few months to come, that could lead to a confrontation. However, confrontations within the crew population that led to arguments were not allowed on the ship. If it got somewhat out of hand, the sailor could be fined a

month's wages, or worse. As Heinesen pointed out, this would mean that spaces on board were of huge importance. Finding the right space to avoid an intolerable person, could be difficult or impossible in a fairly cramped space such as the main deck or lower deck of a frigate. The sub-culture that developed in different spaces of the ship would therefore be of great importance to different people on board. Especially considering that this took place among people who came together from different backgrounds to take an unglamorous job that had a risk of dying along the way, it seems likely that some people within the crew may not get along. In case of a situation where someone did not get along, the small space of the ship may have seemed even smaller. Therefore, getting a crew together that initially got along well, would make a big difference in the life of a sailor. And, if the crew did not get along well, having someone on board who could resolve differences to create a more tight-knit crew would have been highly valuable. This means that learning or creating techniques to deal with this could be central points of life as a sailor. If a sailor could not learn or come up with techniques to deal with difficult social situations like this, he would have to learn to ignore it, or find spaces in the limited space where he could avoid having to confront the situation. Alternatively, he would have to find allies who could resolve the situation on his behalf. This is one way that the materialistic and phenomenological approaches highlight aspects of the social dynamics in the crew population on board. These skills may have been central in the lives of many sailors on ships such as those of the WIGC. When slaves were on board they lived within a total institution themselves within the ship's structure. For them there was no escape, and the sound scape would be filled with the hundreds of presumably angry, scared or enraged voices of those they were imprisoned alongside. In that sense, voices in Danish and Norwegian languages were the voices of captors and slave traders.

Sight

From a phenomenological point of view, sailors did see the world in a global sense. One thing is that the sea looks different in some different places on the globe. Another is the changing landscapes they sailed past or anchored by. As Sir Francis Bacon said in the quote that was referenced above, there is nothing to be seen on a ship but the sea and the sky. Add in to this the faces of the people an individual was on board the with, and the structure of the ship itself, and it is almost the whole package. Sight was nonetheless a factor. A sailor would

see weather, sails, shorelines and possibly other ships, which will have been noteworthy elements to see and observe. The comparative darkness below deck to that on deck was another element of sight that would stand out. The cargo hold will have been the darkest area on the ship, and it was mostly off limits to the crew.

Smell

Smells was another dimension of the wooden sail ships. The planking of the ship, and the ropes, could be impregnated with tar to protect them from water and wear and tear. If the air blew towards a sailor in the right way, the salty smell of tar, mixed with the smell of hemp which the ropes were made of, would hit his nose. After a few days at sea, the sailor might not notice the salt in the sea air anymore, but the fresh sea air would still dominate life on deck. The tightly packed space of the ship comes in as an element in the sensory impression of smell on the ship as well. Firstly, human bodies that do not have access to cleaning facilities start to smell. With dozens of men living closely on top of each other, smells will have been strongly noticeable as a general odour of the front part of the ship as a place. From the areas that held slaves, between Ghana and the Caribbean, the smells of 5-600 imprisoned people who did not have the opportunity to wash themselves in any noteworthy way, will have affected the smells on the ship in a strong way. It will have created significant differences in the phenomenology of the ship before, during and after the passage between Africa and the Caribbean. Furthermore, the frigates of the WIGC most likely mostly did not have a chimney leading from the galley, where food was prepared. This meant smoke would spread out through the lower deck area, and escape where it could. Recently after a meal had been cooked, the smell of smoke would hang in the air, along with tar, hemp, and the smell that would come from clothes and the bodies of between 20 and 60 people who lived in a relatively confined space together. There were no real toilets for the crew. Convention was that sailors and soldiers climbed into the built-out decoration at the bow of the ship. The Ship Articles have specific instructions for where people were allowed to defecate: This had to happen on the anchor. The anchor was at the front of the ship. Urinating was also only allowed in designated places. Failure to follow these instructions led to a penalty of one month's salary.¹⁶⁹ The smells of the remains of 40 to 60 men answering the call of nature in

¹⁶⁹ Ship Articles Point 34. Scan 12.

the open at the bow of the ship must have been noticeable, even if most of it went into the water. Some ships carried over 500 slaves from the Danish castle in Ghana. The smells from defecation, urinating, and the bodily odour of 5-600 people, or even just 40-60 during the less populated stretches, must have been a strong, outstanding element of life on board.

Smells were also an element of spaces. On the main deck, the air was constantly being replaced, and the air of bodily odour, excrement and urine could presumably be avoided in several locations. Below deck, the air could not as easily escape. Smoke, sweat, urine, food and clothes must have become part of the atmosphere and may have gotten stuck in the wooden walls, floor and ceiling as well. People more or less regularly became sick and died on these voyages. The sick were kept in particular areas and given care determined by the ship council. Deadly sick people in hot tropical air were thus also an element of the smells in certain areas on board. Fresh sea air may have been a welcome escape from the smells of various spaces and locations on the tightly packed ship. In the context of sweat, used clothes, breathing and other odours that remained in a place, the smells of smoke from the firing up of the galley may have been a welcome “cleansing” that overpowered bad smells. On the main deck, tobacco smoking, which was allowed in designated areas¹⁷⁰, may have been a highly desirable escape simply from the smells of the people and the place around them.

Taste

Taste can affect mood, and possibly even change behaviour. In light of a comparison to the plight the slaves went through, taste can only ever appear to be a trivial aspect of life. But at the same time, it is not trivial. The slaves were transported to St. Thomas or another Caribbean island, and were placed in a horrible circumstance there as well, after the life-changing horror of the slave ship transport. This means the ship crews already, on arrival in Ghana, were willing to treat people as slaves. If something ever was to break the slave traders out of their pattern, as people willing to treat people as slaves, it was not by developing an elevated appreciation of something in life such as good food based on the ship cuisine. Not that it necessarily could, as there is no proven link between food and evil. But for the slave

¹⁷⁰ Ship Articles Point 30. Scan 12.

traders, being the crews on the WIGC ships, the tastes of everyday life compounded an already bad situation. As was seen in the previous chapter, Danish historian Henning Henningsen described the living conditions for sailors as being almost from a different world than our in comparison unbelievable living standards in welfare societies. In comparison with what the slaves endured, this is again nearly trivial. But added onto those living conditions was that the food was dry, hard, highly salted and of poor quality. Drinking water could, depending on the circumstances, be so bad that it was nearly undrinkable, had to be drunk in the dark using the teeth as a sieve, or could make the sailors get sick and possibly die. Month after month, through year after year, this may have added a further negative element of sailor life. This puts into perspective, on some level, the value of consumables that could “cleanse” the tastes by overpowering what had been drunk or eaten. Beer seems to have been one element that had such a use. Spirits, wine and smoking tobacco may have been others. Good, clean fresh water was presumably also among these. The taste dimension of the phenomenology of being on board must have been somewhat different later in the 18th century, as Svalesen wrote that Fredensborg of 1767 had live animals with them on board, that would be used for eggs and fresh meat.

The ‘local’ nature of society on board

Because of the limitations of the physical structure in which the sailors, soldiers and officers lived, the ships were necessarily societies the sailors the majority of the time could not escape. Despite sailing past the coast of Portugal or western Africa, as two examples, the sailors would experience the world they saw while being within a small Danish-Norwegian society, no matter where they were on the globe. The exception to this was when slaves were on board, which added different cultures to the environment. For the legs of the journey between Denmark-Norway and Guinea, and St. Thomas and Denmark-Norway again, or for other long-distance merchant ships, this meant that they saw the world while almost only remaining within the particular northern European society they came from. This would mean that when the ship-board society became familiar, and became its own ‘local’ society, the sailors might see the other side of the globe, but experience it almost only through their ‘local’ society. Considering how the regulations reinforced the hierarchy and society of the ship, the ‘local’ nature of the society on board seems to have been strengthened. Even when

slaves were on board, the crews saw the world, slave trading, global trade systems, and other locations on other continents, through the legally reinforced society and hierarchy that had been drawn up in northern Europe, where the ruling language was Danish. However, the shipboard environment must have changed radically when slaves were brought aboard. Up to nearly 600 people from a different linguistic, geographical and cultural background made the ship an incredibly global place, which was also an observation no one on board could escape. A small population from one continent transported a large population from another continent, to a third continent. The small population did this knowingly taking part in an international, intercontinental trade system which was set up to take part in the international competition for wealth and power in Europe.

Final analysis

The final analysis will attempt to answer the research questions raised in the ‘Theory and methodology’ section of this paper. They will be presented in order, with answers, here.

In what ways were roles, rules and the expected behaviour communicated and illustrated to those on board?

The list of research questions for the thesis begins with this one. This was communicated in a multitude of ways. Initially, it must have been communicated at the point of recruitment. The sailors will have been told of the type of job they were expected to do, and that they would get accommodation and victuals for the duration of the journey. Degn & Gøbel have written more extensively about the recruitment process of merchant sailors. A considerable amount was presumably also known about this job in society, especially for someone considering joining. They may have talked to someone who had been at sea, or have a relative who had sailed. However, on board, this was communicated before the journey began. Svalesen describes, for the ship *Fredensborg*, that ship articles and regulations were read aloud to the crew on the day of departure.¹⁷¹ If the crew did not know before they boarded the ship, they

¹⁷¹ Svalesen (1996) p. 39.

will have been told and shown where they would sleep and live on the day of embarkation. When it comes to how the expected behaviour on board was communicated, this is complex and difficult to answer. Much of this was covered by the regulations. As has been seen presented in this thesis, there were some aspects of shipboard life the regulations on the ship created a framework for. Aspects such as the responsibilities of various roles, the structure of the day, religious worship, which spaces on the ship that belonged to which group were covered in the regulations. Criminal behaviour was also covered, and this was part of the ship articles that were read to the crew before departure. The corresponding brutal punishments that at least existed on paper were supposed to create a shock effect that would prevent anyone from performing such acts and breaking the rules. This, being the ship articles and further regulations, were communicated verbally to the crew, and laid the basis for a framework for the society that would be created on board. Beyond this, there must have been socialisation processes within the sailor crew, and between officers and crew, that would be a part of the society that would be created under way on the voyage. Because of the lack of journals and protocols for the ships in this period that describe ship-board life with this kind of detail, it is not possible to describe such processes as they were on the ships in the time period in question.

What other ways was this communicated than the spoken word?

The second research question asked ‘What other ways was this communicated than the spoken word?’ This question also has an answer that has many facets. It was attempted answered in this thesis by breaking the position of the sailor down into seven ways in which their lives were limited by how life on board was organized for them. These seven ways were presented at some length in the main body of the thesis, and are summarized in the summary below. Placement in their own, delineated space on the ship, the salary they received which kept them in a certain financial group in society, the clothing style and the type of clothing they could afford with their salary, punishments for wrongdoing, and factors such as the impossibility to escape the environment, for long periods of time, were part of communicating the roles and position of sailors on board. These were elements of communication of the social dynamics on board that were non-verbal. Walking around on the main deck, or going to the lower deck, aware of that the aft upper deck, the cabins, and the

storage areas were off limits, and with no possibility of escape in any direction while out at sea, will have been the main non-verbal communicator and reminder of what social position the sailor had. After a while at sea the limitation of the space must have become a noticeable limitation that made the low position the sailor had in the hierarchy clear. Seeing people punished by being clapped in irons, tied to the mast, or beaten would have been quite clear indicators of the way life on board functioned. Visual symbols such as clothing, material symbols like the equipment used for eating, and the restrictions from taking food or drink when they wanted, would add to the non-verbal communication of life on board.

What were the dynamics between some role-holders and others?

This question has an interesting answer. The captain, who in most cases was the head of the ship, was mostly not a worker. His primary responsibility was to ensure that the ship performed well. This included delegating work tasks to the right people, agreeing on course and sails with the first mate, and to ensure that the ship crew as a whole functioned as it should. An aspect of this responsibility included to make sure all the regulations for shipboard life were followed to an acceptable extent according to his judgement. Furthermore, it included ensuring that the right documentation was being kept in a proper way. His work tasks did not include almost any work, in the sense of physically performing tasks that made the ship sail or maintenance on the ship. The captain's role was rather to overall oversee that the officers used the crew well and oversee the success of the trade mission. He also dictated letters, communicated with representatives while in port, and communicated with other ships they encountered. He slept in his own cabin, and as an officer, had access to more food and more and better drink. He also had a salary that was quite a lot higher than that of anyone else, and especially compared to the sailors. In these senses of his role, he was far removed from the regular sailor.

On the other hand, in some moments his daily life on board was not necessarily so different from the regular sailor. The point of view of the non-event was used in the phenomenological analysis above. Non-events were what defined long periods of the time spent on the ship – routine work tasks being performed, or nothing happening at all. In such moments, the captain and the sailor were not necessarily so different. Many of the same aspects of life can

be said to be true for a sailor standing idle on deck in a moment of quiet, as can be said for the captain in a similar situation. Standing on deck, in a single chosen moment of idleness, on the surface not much may have separated the two men. They were both adult men, most likely from Denmark-Norway, and with a high likelihood they both spoke Danish. The natural and physical environment they were in was the same for both of them – the wooden deck under their feet, the sun on their face, the fresh sea air in their face and hair, and the smell of salt, possibly mixed in with tar, hemp, unwashed bodies and smoke. If they were within eyesight of each other, which would be almost unavoidable on the WIGC frigates, and if the moment of analysis is one of quiet on the ship, then they would be surrounded by more or less the same social environment – other men of various ages who were in the same moment and situation as themselves. They would hear the chatter of people talking, and possibly some men singing. The two would have to abide by the same social rules and regulations. And while they were on the ship, it would make no difference who received a larger salary or had a nicer house on land at home. On a human level, and from a phenomenological point of view, in this surface situation there was not much that differentiated the sailor and the captain.

However, the reality beyond this situation would also be unavoidably apparent. The captain would most likely be standing on the upper deck, and either way on the aft of the ship behind the main mast. The sailor would be in front of the mast. Their clothing may be strikingly different in style, materials and quality. After sleeping in a room full of many relatively unfamiliar people, eating mediocre or bad food for weeks, drinking bad water, and never being able to escape the company of the 40 others in the same space as him, the life of the sailor will have seemed fairly different than that of the captain, even in that moment of idleness. The captain famously had a cabin to himself, that he at most shared with two other people. If he was so inclined, he could take a glass from the wine or spirits selection in his cabin on a bad day. He could seek out solitude and escape from the environment by delegating work tasks and going into his cabin. If he had reliable, good officers, it is likely the captain would not need to be on deck for days at a time if he was so inclined. As such, even though their situations in many aspects were similar, and they shared the same natural environment and inhabited the same physical structure, the freedoms the captain could enjoy was one major difference in the dynamics of life on board. This is another perspective that

again emphasizes that space, roles and regulations made significant factors in the social dynamics of life in the different roles on board.

When it comes to the social dynamics *between* people in these two roles, this has been presented in individual bits in the main body chapters above. The sailor was the subject of the captain's authority. The entire structure of life on the ships was built up around emphasizing this fact. The distribution of people into different spaces on the ships emphasized this, in that the officers had one area that was their dominion, and the sailors were placed somewhere else. The limitations on the freedoms or privileges of the sailor were set up to completely prevent the sailor from changing or attacking the dynamics of life on the ship. Speaking against the captain was on paper supposed to be punished by execution. This was one of the regulations that would have been read to the sailors and everyone on board before departure. The sailor would then have taken an oath to respect this, and even if he had not spoken the words aloud when the others spoke their oaths, it was counted as that he had given his oath to respect these rules nonetheless.

However, as it has become clearer through researching this thesis that the organization on the WIGC ships was modelled fairly closely on Danish naval ships, it is unlikely that sailors would have many occasions to speak against the captain in the first place. The sailing aspect of the ships was primarily run by the team of the first mate. The dynamic of the first mate is interesting, as it is one of the central dynamics in the professional life on the ship, and will by its nature have had a central place in the social dynamics. As mentioned above, the role of the captain had little to do with the actual physical work of making the ship sail. This was because this was one of the primary responsibilities of the first mate and his team of mates. The first mate set the course and direction in agreement with the captain, and the ship master if there was one, and then he was responsible for running steering, speed and instructing those below him to perform the necessary tasks to make this happen. Below him, the first mate may have a second mate, possibly even a third mate, and an apprentice. When it came to sailing the ship, it was this team of mates that had the job of making sure that happened. The first mate also had the boatswain below him in the hierarchy who he could ask or order to perform certain tasks. It was most likely the first mate who gave orders to the sailors, or he asked a lower mate or another lower officer to do this for him. Whenever events happened in

relation to the daily work that had to do with sailing, such as changing of sails, adjustments, or measuring speed, it would be the team of the first mate that would be at the center of this activity. As such they were at the center of the social dynamics that happened in relation to much of the work that had to be done on the ship. The team of the first mate, and especially the first mate himself, would have been one of the most active workers on the ship, or at least the one that had the most duties and responsibilities. Part of his role was also to delegate the work that came from this to his second mate, other officers, and the sailors. The personality and behavior of the first mate, and those of the people in his team, would therefore be central in the dynamics of work and social environment on the ship. The person in the role of the first mate needed to have a dynamic both upward and downward, as he needed to have a functioning relationship with the captain, who he additionally ate his meals with, and also with the lower officers and sailors.

Without going into too much additional detail, these were some central dynamics between the roles of the captain, the first mate and his team, and the sailors. There could be considerable distance between the captain and the sailors, even though there were also many similarities between their situations that made life in their roles fairly similar in some moments. There were many echelons or levels within shipboard society, some of which came from the hierarchy itself and other elements that will have stemmed from age, experience, and simply differences in personality. There were ship boys, inexperienced sailors of different ages, and experienced sailors of the same. People came from different geographical, linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds, which will all also have affected the social dynamics on board.

Using a phenomenological approach, based on a materialistic examination of the WIGC ships, what can be said about social dynamics on board WIGC ships between 1690 and 1721?

This is the fourth and final of the main research questions in this thesis. The answer to this question is to some extent answered in the analysis given under question three, above. Beyond what is written under that question, what can be emphasized is what the phenomenological view offered beyond what direct answers the written material itself provided. The primary sources and the material evidence from the time period provided a

framework where, along with further information from secondary sources and some theoretical approaches, more perspectives could be gotten than what the individual sources provide. As mentioned several times above, Johan Heinesen's example of presenting sail ships as primarily being experienced by ear opens a world of analysis up to understanding the life on the ships on other levels than what the primary sources say. The phenomenological approach provides a medium to explore and emphasise such perspectives. The experience in using the material for this thesis has been that the phenomenological approach has enriched the understanding and analysis of life on board. The material itself has not in all cases said so much individually, but putting pieces of material together and using a certain theoretical approach helped create perspectives on some aspects of social dynamics. Taking a starting point in Heinesen's point of view that sail ships primarily were experienced by ear, and considering the limited space the notable number of sailors and soldiers lived in, together with the material knowledge of the ships and further secondary history, it seems clear that an exploration of the larger sensory world is important to learn more about the social dynamics and life on sail ships. The exploration of the sensory world for a sailor on a WIGC ship is in many ways itself an exploration of central aspects of social dynamics on the ships. Creating the context for making the point of how 'present' or 'loud' voices would be in the soundscape, and how relevant this became because of the concept of space, is an observation that must sit at the heart of social dynamics on board. Continuing along this path, the concept of time, tempo, urgency or lack thereof, seems to have been other central concepts that must have shaped social life on board. Visual indicators such as clothing may also have been unavoidable markers that set people apart, or put some people together. Tastes, nutrition and smells have been other elements that were explored to illuminate the phenomenological side of life in the role of a WIGC sailor. The realities and dynamics of the different roles will have created certain "paths" or patterns in the general social dynamics on board that were more or less unavoidable. Beyond this, personality, preferences and individual choices will have made this into a lively world, which are aspects that will have been changing constantly.

Two additional sub-questions

In addition to the four main questions in this thesis, two additional minor questions were posed. These can be answered briefly here, since their answers do add interesting and

relevant additional perspectives on the material. The first of these two questions is ‘Were the differences between people on board great?’ The answer to this is that on paper the differences between the highest and lowest of the people on board were indeed great. While they were on the ship, many of these differences persisted, in that the captain had a supervisory role, his own cabin, and a position of high authority on the ship. This was in contrast to the lower position of the sailor, which had much fewer material privileges and a primarily physical job. In between these there were officers of various levels, some of whom had significant privileges and others without. In many moments, the differences may not have been noticed. As mentioned above under the answer to question three, the sailors and the officers shared the natural and physical environment, and to some extent also the social environment. The space was likely too small for these differences to always appear great. However, when it came to heavier moments, such as when physical work needed to be done, the sailor would notice that he had no choice of where he needed to be, whereas the captain did. In elements of life such as personal space and sleeping, the captain additionally had his own space, which some of the officers also did, but the sailors did not. In bad weather, the captain may choose to go indoors. A sailor on duty could not. In other aspects and other types of moments, such as during non-event moments as have been described above, the differences were not necessarily so great. Furthermore, the captain, the ship master and the first mate were allowed to do significant duty-free private trading on the voyages. This means that people who already had money were given greater opportunity to gain more money. As an expression of power relations in the Early Modern period, this reflects that those who already were in powerful positions that yielded significant monetary benefits were provided with more opportunities to increase this beneficial situation further. As such, this is the opposite of a system that would favour equality, which would instead have provided equal opportunity for gaining personal profit from private trade. In these regards, the differences between people on board were also great.

The second of these additional questions is ‘How was life on board affected by the economic and political game the merchants and royalty in Denmark and Norway took part in?’ An answer to this is that the economic and political game affected life on board significantly in some instances. One reason is that the risk of attacks by privateers was high when the monarchy and its advisors got involved in the Great Northern War. The merchant fleets were significantly reduced in size because of attacks by Swedish privateers. However, most of all

this will have been noticed by that the people on board were slave traders. They bought people from one continent, transported them in horrible conditions to another continent, and sold them. It was unavoidable for anyone on board to not realise that they were buying and selling people in a global system. They travelled around half the world to make a profit, even if the sailors themselves were not allowed to do much personal trading. It must have been unavoidable for the sailors or officers to be fully aware of that they were taking part in an international, intercontinental trade system that was set up so the merchants in Denmark could make large profits. The economic and political game the merchants and the royalty in Denmark-Norway took a part in must have been a present factor in the roles and lives of all the crew members on board.

Summary and final conclusions

To summarize the material and analysis in this thesis, and to reach some final conclusions, some central findings will be presented first. After that, the seven central communicators that were used as perspectives for analysis will be evaluated on their use as tools. Subsequently, the use of Goffman's perspectives will be evaluated and concluded upon, before the final conclusory paragraphs. These final conclusory paragraphs present answers to the research questions of the thesis in a fluid text. The research questions were elaborated on in the subsection 'Final analysis'.

Organized like a navy ship

It has become apparent through working on this paper that that hierarchy, roles, spaces and ship types often were modelled closely on the Danish navy ships. This is something that stands out, and has become increasingly apparent through the work on this thesis. While WIGC ships were merchant ships, their role as a long-distance voyager, with the dangers that may entail, has evidently made the company organize them more like naval ships than a regular merchant ship. While Knut Sprauten's text about merchant ships has been consulted consistently for information and comparison, it is Svein Molaug's text in the same work about the navy in the 17th century that more closely fits with the investigation of the structure of WIGC ships. While this paper is not a comparative study, using naval sources for understanding conditions on WIGC ships in this time period seems to be a correct way of analysing.

The role of the captain

The role of the captain has been explored to the extent that it became apparent that the captain's tasks do not seem to have involved any physical work tasks in making the ship sail, or to make anything happen with the ship. His job seems to have been almost purely that of a leader, or a symbol of the ship. In many ways his role seems to have been one that was a

supervisor mixed with being a representative of the ship. This elevated position must have opened up for many different ways of behaving in the role of the captain. He could be distant and delegate, or present and involved. His tasks on the ship included agreeing with the first mate on navigation and course, making sure that rules and regulations were followed to an acceptable extent to his judgement, and making sure books were kept. He could delegate almost all of these tasks. One of the most important tasks for the captain was to hire a good crew with competent and reliable officers. This happened before departure. Additionally, equipping the ship with victuals and goods before departure, and fresh water during stops along the way, were among his responsibilities. Beyond this, while on the journey at sea, the captain could be more of a symbol and an observer than a worker, if everything was running well. The captain was allowed to do significant duty-free private trading on the voyages, which could increase his personal wealth up to 15 times more than a sailor could.

Furthermore, like on a Danish naval ship, and on many Dutch and Spanish long distance merchant ships, the captain sometimes had a ship master above him. The ship master was someone who was financially invested in the ship or the trade mission, who went on the trade journey to ensure the company's interests were taken care of in the way he preferred it. In this case the captain's work responsibilities were lessened more, as the ship master was then the head of the ship. In this case, on paper, the captain's role seems solely to have been to supervise the officers and the crew. Performing the sailing aspects of the agreed upon course and navigation was the job of the first mate and his team, and the ship master was in that case in charge of documentation and representing the ship to the outside world when necessary.

The role of the sailor

In comparison, the role of the sailor was different. The sailor's role and the social dynamics for the people in this role were explored in this paper by focusing on seven selected ways in which his freedom was restricted. The sailor had particular tasks that belonged to his role, which were performed on the main deck before the mast. His space on the ship was mostly limited to the main deck and the lower deck, a space he shared with up to 50 other men and boys for several months. The regulations of the ship protected the hierarchy and the

organization of life on the ship in a strong way. This limited behaviour and, on some points, freedom of speech. Speaking against the captain or disrespecting god were supposed to lead to execution, even though it has been presented that it was unlikely that the strongest punishments were used often. The sailor received a diet that on paper would have given him a significant coverage of his caloric needs, with sailors on merchant ships apparently consuming around 6000 calories per day. However, the food was usually considered to be bad, extremely salty because of how it was conserved, and of poor quality. The water could have a bad taste or simply be so bad it could be toxic. The sailors could rarely leave the ship, and had no place to go to escape the place where they lived and worked.

These limitations were not the only aspects of life as a WIGC sailor or the role of the sailor. The sailor received accommodation, food, drink and medical attention for free, plus a salary. He received company in a social environment. For those who enjoyed it, a structured day with physical work was also something the sailor got the opportunity to have. Furthermore, he was out in a natural environment with fresh air. He knew that he would be on the ship for months to come, so his life had predictability, stability and to an extent safety for that foreseeable time, depending on the circumstances. The ship was a space where there were few sources of sound, with many people living on top of each other, meaning storytelling, knowledge sharing and singing would be elements of social life. The time frame of the journey meant that he would have a large amount of time where life went in a fairly low tempo, to find his place in the social, professional and physical environment on the ship. The sailor got the opportunity to gain up to the value of three months' salary in profit on duty-free private trade on the WIGC trade trips.

The 'local' nature of life on board

WIGC ships, unlike merchant ships that for instance travelled within the Baltic Sea or other places closer to Denmark-Norway, had something of a global character. They took part in the increasing globalization of European society that was ongoing, and tied Denmark-Norway directly into this process. However, society on board does not seem to largely have been shaped by this global characteristic. The society on board was modelled on ships that sailed

in northern Europe, and the hierarchy and nature of this society was protected by the regulations that outlined the structure of life on board and punishments for illegal behaviour. The languages that were spoken on board were primarily Danish, with some creoloid of Danish and Norwegian, some Norwegian, and possibly some other creoloids such as of Danish and Dutch or Danish and German. At times, the officers that spoke other languages may make use of some other major maritime languages from northern Europe, being primarily Dutch and English, if visits or calling at ports required it. Those on board saw their participation in a global endeavour from a 'local' shipboard society that remained defined and characterised by the society it came from. The elements of globality they saw will have been the change in climate, the landscapes they sailed past or the ports or natural harbours they stopped in. However, when the ship took aboard slaves in Ghana, this dramatically changed the participation in the global nature of the trade. This would mean weeks of living in the same space as people from a different geographical, linguistic and cultural background. Acting as slave carriers made the sailors participants in the terrible aspect of the political and economic game they performed on behalf of the high merchants and officials in Europe.

Regulations preventing shipboard economy and organized gangs

An interesting observation that was made while going through the ship regulations was that different elements of the regulations, presented in different places, seem to be set up to prevent any kind of shipboard economy and to prevent exploitation of people within the crew population. It was not allowed to sell or give away clothes, no one could do anyone's work task for them without direct approval from the captain, no one could will away their possessions to anyone but their family, and any debts incurred from gambling did not have to be repaid if they were discovered. No one was allowed to sell anything to any other crew member without the approval of the ship council. Such regulations mean that no one could pressure anyone into work for them, or to sell them any of their possessions. No hidden gambling debts could be paid since every transaction would have to be approved by the ship council. With the relatively speaking high numbers of dead to tropical diseases or other causes on the long-distance trips, no one could be pressured to will away their possessions in the event of such an occurrence. This would mean that even if someone were to be pressuring someone financially, or gambling, or organized in a gang, there was little potential

for efficiency in using strength to get anything from other sailors. Sailors had relatively few possessions, clothing being one of them. Without a legal shipboard economy, no legal debts from gambling, and no one being allowed to work on anyone else's behalf, this would reduce the efficiency of anyone trying to gain advantage from pressuring anyone else. As such, it seems that elements of the regulations have been set up in part to prevent such situations from becoming possible.

Space and sound

Danish maritime historians Johan Heinesen and Henning Henningsen both emphasise that the nature of spaces were essential aspects of life on board, and that certain spaces created and made room for specific sub-cultures on board. In the phenomenological analysis it was elaborated upon that space and sound were central aspects of social life on board. The space that was available for sailors was the main deck and the lower deck. The ship type seems to usually have been a frigate. Up to 50 people could be populating the main and lower deck of the ship on a WIGC trip. There were few sources of sound, and the wooden structure absorbs sound. Wind and water would be soft sounds. Voices would be dominating aspects of the soundscape in such a limited space for that amount of people, with little to no other sources of sound. Talking and storytelling were major aspects of the social life on board. Spaces were also defined by smells. Smoke, unwashed bodies of people living closely together in a limited area, and 40-60 people defecating and urinating in designated places of the ship, created smells that will have been notable aspects of life on board. If slaves were on board, this dimension of living in the space of the ship increased dramatically because the population then could reach around 600 in total.

Time and non-event

The concept of time should not be underestimated when describing or analysing the life of a sailor on a long-distance voyage. This is not new knowledge in itself, but to emphasize dealing with the element of time in the sense as a central skill and aspect of life as a sailor is to recognize a behavioural and cultural element that has value. Between destinations, the

sailors had weeks at sea. Before they returned to Copenhagen four to twelve months may have passed. As outlined in the final analysis, time was an element in daily life. Tempo, the lack of urgency in many situations, and the availability of time in large quantities compared to the available tasks made time an element of sailor life and social dynamics. Non-events were a proportionally longer element of life than events on board. Dealing with a life that was full of non-events will have been a defining characteristic of sailors. It must have affected culture.

Alcohol

The role of alcohol on board, while not largely dealt with in primary sources, should be mentioned in the summary and conclusion about life as a WIGC sailor, and possibly of life as a sailor in general in this time period. Alcohol was present in a significant way on the WIGC ships. While drunkenness was illegal and punishable, it is likely that some or possibly most sailors were somewhat intoxicated every day. As Sprauten emphasized, sailors could drink up to three liters of beer every day. Henningsen pointed out that ship beer in this time had 1-1,5% level of alcohol, which makes the level of intoxication for that amount of beer comparatively low to that of most beer today. However, sailors were additionally offered small amounts of spirits as well. While Henningsen wrote that hard liquor rarely was present on regular merchant ships, it seems that WIGC ships did have and offer this to their sailors. One ship left Denmark-Norway with 116 litres of spirits. Sailors did have the option of drinking water instead of beer, and to decline taking spirits. Henningsen did however point out that drinking water often was of such poor quality and with such bad taste, because of the ways it was collected and stored, that most sailors preferred to drink beer until they ran out of it. This was in a different time than the present day, with a different culture, but it is noteworthy to examine this as being a part of shipboard culture and life as a sailor.

The use of the seven central communicators as tools of analysis

Selecting seven elements to use as perspectives for presenting information and for analysis proved useful. The selected topics allowed for selective use of the material, and created

points of view for looking for insights for various aspects of life on board. Rather than handling the available material as a whole, the seven particular topics created useful perspectives.

The use of Goffman for analysis

Some perspectives from the sociologist Erving Goffman were introduced in the 'Theory and methodology' section for use in analysis about WIGC ships. Specifically, his explanation of his term 'total institution' gives some perspectives that highlight some central aspects of the ship as a place. However, even though 'total institution' is a term that brings to a critical light some central aspects of the structure of life on board, it cannot be concluded that it is a term that defines or explains social dynamics on board. The ship was a workplace, a place of accommodation and a place for social life. As such, it was a place where there was room for most of the fairly common aspects of life. However, Goffman's term makes a point out of the specifics of this situation – how work, spare time, and sleep happened in the same limited space, with the same co-participants and under the same authority. As such, the encompassing nature of the ship as an institution where the inhabitants did not have the opportunity to leave, at least not for long stretches at a time, is a defining aspect of the ship as a place. The term 'total institution' does add another element of emphasis on the nature of the place. The purpose of this structure was that certain populations were handled as blocks, which certainly has elements to it that were true for the sailors. Taking into account the element of time, of the duration of the journey in total and the duration between ports, the encompassing nature of the ship is an additional aspect to emphasise about the ship as a place. This type of terminology can even be useful as a perspective on different areas on the ship – for the sailors, the main deck and the lower deck in front of the mast was to an extent a total institution for them within the ship in this sense.

His concept leads towards what the nature of a total institution means for those who live within it, and to understand why the institution is set up the way it is. Goffman explains that inhabitants in a total institution, under the conditions mentioned above, are treated like blocks of people. The group of sailors, when looking at the WIGC ships on paper, seem to have been

treated as blocks of people. The authority of the smaller elite, the rules and regulations, and the assigned times the sailors were required to do tasks or take meals, etc, together with a group of others in the same situation, fits this description. However, there is also an element of sheer practicality that can explain some of these mechanisms. The job of the sailors was to collect cargo on the other side of the Earth. At the time this could only be done by using a ship. Out of practicality, the ship was workplace and home for those on board. Goffman's theoretical approach also emphasises how there would be a strong structural difference between the ruling elite and those in blocks below them. This cannot necessarily be taken as being a suitable description of the WIGC ships. Henning Henningsen explained that the strict regulations with their brutal punishments for wrongdoing in fact rarely were followed to their strongest extent. Taking into account the need for fluid interaction between some officers and the sailors, and how everyone on board were employees of the same company, there may have been a multitude of more fluid dynamics and interactions between people on board of different stations than what the 'total institution' model describes. It was however a useful perspective to have on the ships, and adds a terminology and conceptual understanding of the ships beyond what a description without this would have.

Final conclusion

So, in conclusion, what does the materialistic and phenomenological approach, combined with other research, say about social dynamics for crew on WIGC ships between 1690 and 1721? The materialistic approach to life on the ship showed that the ship as a place was limited in size, relatively speaking large in population, and confined from the rest of the outside world for weeks or months at a time. The diet was rich in calories, but usually considered to be poor in quality and taste. Alcohol was present every day for most of the crew on board, though it was low in strength. Intoxication from alcohol was, however, a constant presence on the ships. The placement of different people from different roles in the hierarchy was one defining factor for social dynamics. Because of the limitations of space the designations of people in some roles to some areas, and the amount of people in those areas, created spaces on board that were defined by different sub-cultures. This was traditional on ships in and before the time period. Smells from bodily odour, from defecation and urination

in designated places, and smoke from cooking, were aspects that took part in defining different spaces on board.

The regulations for life on board laid a framework for how the society on board should function, and protected the hierarchy, the health of the crew and the safety of the ship. This shipboard society was based closely on that on Danish naval ships, but was specifically designed for the individual Danish trade companies. The regulations were set up in various ways to prevent a shipboard economy, either monetary or of barter, and to prevent the effectiveness of anyone victimizing weaker individuals. Punishments for perpetrating serious crimes could be brutal and fatal, although the regulations were often not followed to their strongest extent. The phenomenological view emphasised that the pressure on spaces on the ship, combined with the nature of the ship as a place out at sea, meant that ships to a significant extent were experienced by ear. The softness of sounds of the ship as a physical structure in its natural environment, emphasised the role of voices as filling the soundscape. Storytelling and talking, and possibly singing, were central in the soundscape on board. Time, with the meaning of the tempo on board, the lack of urgency in many moments on board, and the perception of time as being in considerable quantity on a long-distance voyage, has likely been another defining aspect on board.

In conclusion, spaces, sound, tempo and time, have been found to be central elements in social dynamics and life on board. Furthermore, sailors would have had more to do with the first mate than the captain in their daily work. The first mate and his team were in charge of the work that had to do with making the ship sail. They delegated tasks to that effect to lower officers and sailors. The captain had a particular role, in that he had little work to do in physically contributing to the performance of the ship. His role was as a leader and supervisor, and as such as symbol of the trade mission on board. He was also a symbol of the ship outwards, to visitors from other ships or when going into port. Thirdly, he was the symbol of the ship upwards, in that he was responsible for that the ship performed its duty effectively on behalf of the merchants of the WIGC. One of the goals in this thesis was to examine if the shipboard society was a reflection of power relations in Early Modern Danish-Norwegian society. These power relations are reflected in that the high officers were given eight to 31 times as large a potential for gaining personal profit from private trade on the

journeys compared to the sailors. This reflects a society that was set up to give wealthy people the opportunity to get wealthier, and restricting those who were in low-income positions from getting the same chances to improve their financial standing. This expression of power relations is also reflected in the way people in different positions lived on the ship.

The main ways this thesis stands out compared to other secondary literature on the subject area are the phenomenological highlighting of time and sound, which builds on Heinesen and Henningsen. Furthermore, the further abstraction of the role of the merchant captain on Danish long-distance voyages, and the exploration of how the regulations included attempts to prevent a shipboard economy and victimization stand out somewhat in the context of Molaug, Sprauten, Henningsen and Svalesen. Furthermore, it is in the analysis of the structure of life on the WIGC ships. The ways in which life on board was particular to the WIGC, compared to long-distance merchant ships from other countries or merchant ships within Europe, was the combination of the global nature of their mission, the time frame of life on board for a single mission, with the juxtaposition of that this global nature of the mission was seen on the ship within a society that was based on ships travelling within northern Europe. In this society the actors originated from Denmark-Norway or nearby territories, and the primary language was Danish, with some linguistic representation of Norwegian and creoloids of Danish and other languages. The WIGC ship as a place was Danish-Norwegian in culture, with influences from the international nature of maritime culture at the time. When slaves were on board, the global nature of the vessel changed dramatically. This involved the crew first hand into the cruel financial game orchestrated by the merchants in Europe, which was a system that was based on racism and slavery. Everyone on board will have been fully aware of their active participation in slavery. The presence of the slaves made the ship highly global in nature, with people from different linguistic, geographical and cultural backgrounds together in the small space the ship was, all moving from one continent to another.

The limitation of the study to the WIGC and to the years 1690 to 1721 were made out of a practical nature, rather than the years or the isolation of the WIGC from other long-distance merchant ships being natural. What these limitations brought were a limitation in time, in order to not allow for longer-term changes to reflect big differences between sources.

However, what can be seen from comparing with the material Svalesen presents from the 1760s is that many things that did not change much even in half a century for the WIGC ships. The choice of the WIGC as a case study for sailor life did add an element to the analysis compared to another trade company, in the sense that compared to the cruel conditions and predicament of the slaves any issues for the sailors were trivial and unimportant. For the WIGC, the major element that defined the ships' mission was that it was based on slavery that stemmed from racism. This point cannot be stressed enough, and is important that it stands out also in the conclusion. As far as conditions for sailors on long-distance merchant journeys in general, beyond the specific focus on WIGC, this could, however, to some extent be studied using these limitations on topic and time period. Some abstractions and generalisations could be made on this, based on the available material.

For the sailors, life on board was defined by the space of the ship, and by the elements it travelled within. It was furthermore defined by that it was limited in duration, but that the time window of the journey was as long as between four months and a year, with the travellers rarely ever leaving the place. It was also defined by a hierarchy that placed people in particular roles, and that these roles gave them specific privileges and limitations. It was defined by salty food, a high caloric intake, and a certain level of daily intoxication from weak beer and small portions of spirits. Furthermore, it was defined by that despite the differences on paper, and the physical separation, high and low crew were in the same situation, going the same places, and breathing the same air. Despite what would happen when the ship returned to its point of origin, while they were on the ship there were moments when the differences in salary of the officers and the sailors made no difference, because of a lack of a shipboard economy, and a shared predicament.

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