Conflict Management in the Atlantic, the North Sea and the Baltic, 1200–1600: Actors, Institutions and Practices of Dispute Settlement

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Datum, Ort: 24.05.2019–25.05.2019, Amsterdam
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Being a rather marginal topic for a long time, the field of premodern maritime conflict and maritime violence has raised the attention of scholars in the past years. New approaches, influenced from cultural and economic history, have studied the practices of conflict management and the dynamic perception of licit and illicit practices in the maritime realm. As such, these micro-studies of maritime conflict management open new perspectives to understand economic and social structures at sea and on land and its dynamics in a broader sense. In this context, the conference organized by Louis Sicking (Amsterdam/Leiden) and Philipp Höhn (Halle) was the final in a series of conferences and workshops, which were part of the NWO funded project „Maritime Conflict Management in Atlantic Europe, 1200–1600" led by Sicking[1]. The aim of the conference was to bring together scholars working on the Baltic and the Atlantic in order to compare and to combine the growing field of conflict management studies with new approaches focusing on the semantics of maritime violence.

In his keynote, GREGOR ROHMANN (Frankfurt am Main) focussed on the changing semantics of maritime violence in the 14th and 15th century. During the second half of the 14th century, growing tensions between powers in the North Sea and Baltic rim led to an increase of the reservoir of violent service providers. Simultaneously, economic networks underwent a process of concentration, strengthening larger hubs and weakening smaller nods. The use of force as a means of individual conflict management at sea be-

came more formalized. Those factors made for a fundamental shift of maritime violence in practice and discourse: from late medieval feud and reprisal to early modern prize law. Rohmann argued that the term piracy is problematic when used for the Middle Ages. It was only in the context of the European expansion from around 1600 onwards when the term „piracy" came closer to its present-day meaning. Rohmann called for the creation of new terms to describe what historians usually describe as piracy in the Middle Ages. The questions concerning historical semantics and the need for an adequate analytical terminology became a red line for the following discussions.

BART HOLTERMAN (Bremerhaven) opened the first panel. Holterman discussed the understudied insular dimension of conflict management by studying the international trade with the north Atlantic Islands. Iceland belonged formally under the Danish-Norwegian crown. The arrival of English and later German merchants in the early 15th century was thus controversial and accompanied by numerous cases of international conflict. Moreover, the remote location of the islands, combined with the low degree of control of the Danish-Norwegian crown, created potential for conflict, as well as the need for alternative methods of conflict resolution and avoidance, which did not involve higher authorities. These special conditions asked for specific ways to deal with conflicts and organise trade. Holterman introduced several different fora on different levels that were held and used to prevent/manage conflicts.

LOUIS SICKING (Amsterdam/Leiden) and REMCO VAN RHEE (Maastricht) studied the interdependencies between prize law, conflict management, economic interests and exploration by the close reading of a case study. The discovery of a case file in the archives of the Great Council of Malines, offers a new perspective on the spectacular first English expedition which resulted in the discovery of the North Cape and – eventually – in direct Anglo-Russian economic and diplomatic re-

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[1] See: https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/research/research-projects/humanities/maritime-conflict-management-in-atlantic-europe

lations. In 1553, the *Edward Bonaventure* set sail from England to search for a North-eastern Passage to Asia. Eventually the ship made it to the White Sea and the captain of the ship, Richard Chancellor, reached Moscow. In 1554, the ship returned to England but was „robbed by Flemings". Besides offering new knowledge on England's pioneering voyage of 1553 the court files offer an example of political pressure on legal decision making.

In the second PHILIPP HÖHN (Halle) analyzed the prominent, but yet understudied role of ecclesiastical institutions and norms in cases of shipwreck and salvage in the Baltic and focused on the privileges, the city of Lübeck gained from ecclesiastical institutions. This prominence can be understood in the context of migration, mission and crusading in the multi-religious dynamic Baltic during the 13th century. Ecclesiastical actors acted in conflicts in various different roles which made them potential partners to negotiate with. Höhn showed how Lübeck used the political dynamics to gain a bundle of privileges exempting the city from the *jus naufragii*. The ecclesiastical titles remained important because the council of Lübeck was able to establish a long-lasting relationship to regional ecclesiastical institutions.

TOBIAS BOESTAD (Paris/Stockholm) studied the legal framework and the practices of conflict management in the Eastern Baltic. As most of the cases seem to have remained unsolved, the disputes often had to be settled by other means. As Boestad showed, it was not uncommon that the merchants blamed other burghers when the wrongdoers themselves could not be punished. Harmed merchants could use various strategies to reclaim goods. The home city of a victim could provide diplomatic assistance. The Hansa tried to settle disputes by imposing sanctions on cities that refused to cooperate to prosecute a member of their community. For a conflict between Germans and Russians, Boestad showed that Russian traditions were followed. This should be seen as a way to use local traditions to ensure local cooperation. Interestingly, older cases could be reopened and used to negotiate. An offer to „forget" about an older case when a newer case was resolved could maybe sway the other party to cooperate.

THOMAS HEEBØLL-HOLM (Odense) focused on the role of central powers in dispute management. Starting from the observation that the medieval kingdoms of England and Denmark shared a number of characteristics, he compared the royal policies regarding maritime conflict. Heebøll-Holm showed that England and Denmark in the years of 1375–1415 had quite different approaches dealing with conflicts on the sea. The English kings took an active role in securing the trade, as well as claim a monopoly on jurisdiction. This however came with great responsibility as one had to control the often unruly mercenaries. The Danish kingdom was scattered after a Kingless time (1332–1340) which complicated the consolidation of power. Denmark had a lot of coast, and controlled the bottleneck between the Baltic and the North Sea that is the Kattegat. Denmark did not need to send out traders as traders (mostly German) would come to Denmark on their own. This meant that maritime disputes were less of a problem for the Danes. They could control trade by just controlling the marketplaces. Heebøll-Holm showed how geography could play a role in shaping royal policies but have completely different consequences. A weakness could thus be seen as a benefit in the case of Denmark.

Finally, FRIEDERIKE HOLST (Lübeck) presented her considerations for an exhibition on maritime conflicts and piracy, which will open in the Hansemuseum in Lübeck September 2019. The exhibition will focus on a lay audience and tries to disenchant old pictures of piracy but instead provide information based on the latest research on maritime conflict management. A biographical approach will show the broad variety of violent actors and how they used violence at sea as a profession. By creating an interactive exhibition, it is possible to show some of the complexity of this topic.

In the next panel JESÚS A SOLÓRZANO TELECHEA (Cantabria) and JOSÉ DAMIÁN GONZALÉS ACRE (University of Murcia) were presenting on the resolution of conflicts between Bilbao and Nantes in the 15th and 16th century, cities which were located in two kingdoms which were often involved in

wars with each other. Solórzano Telechea and Gonzáles Acre showed that although conflict management was shaped by a level of violence, conflicts rarely came to complete escalation. The two cities tried to avoid armed conflict and plunder in order to protect commercial interests.

The focus on changes in practices of conflict management around 1500, which stood in clear contrast to the more dynamic and contested practices of conflict management in the Baltic and North Atlantic in 13th and 14th century, fit to the considerations of KILIAN BAUR (Eichstätt), who presented a case study on conflict management after the Danish-Wendish war 1508–1512. As Baur showed, it seems that criteria for legally confiscating goods were clearly defined in the early 16th century. On the other hand, the study showed that the spaces between diplomacy and litigation were still open around 1500. The Treaty of Malmö (1512), marking the end of the Danish-Wendish War, exemplifies the role of diplomacy in mediaeval conflict management. Questions of possession were translocated from the diplomatic to the individual level.

JUSTYNA WUBS-MROZEWICZ (Amsterdam) illustrated conceptual considerations on conflict management with a case study from the Nordic Seven Year's War (1563–1570), a war fought on hegemony in the Baltic between Sweden and Denmark, Lübeck and the Polish Crown. In 1564, Swedes kidnapped seven Dutch salt ships that were on their way to Riga. Taking her evidence from the case study, she elaborated an analytical tool box for investigating „conflict management". She distinguished between strategies and tactics, strategies being prevention, provocation, maintenance of the status quo, escalation, de-escalation and resolution. In investigating conflict management, one ought to emphasize agency, that of institutional actors in particular. In her conclusion, Wubs-Mrozewicz stressed the importance of using the complex concept „conflict management" in a reflective way, which might generate a better understanding of society as a whole.

The last panel of the workshop tackled conflicts among sailors, merchants and the residents of ports. FREDERIK LYNGE

VOGNSEN (Aarhus) dealt with conflict cases recorded in Helsingør, a port at the Øresund, the gateway between the Baltic and the North Sea. Vognsen showed that foreign traders only found their way to the legal system of a city in case of serious cases. Shippers functioned as mediators between a ship's crew and the local legal system. Their filtering implies a good deal of on-ship conflict management. The reason for this way of doing things seems to be explicable by looking at the aim of a local legal system, which was not justice in a modern sense of morality, but the solving of neighbouring conflicts.

RICHARD BLAKEMORE (Reading) brought semantics back into the discussions by re-reading evidences for the concept of mutiny in 16th and 17th centuries. As Blakemore pointed out, obedience and punishment in case of disobedience were present in premodern law codes, but „mutiny" is not mentioned. Ideas about mutiny were present in wider maritime law though, but persecutions varied. What is perceived as mutiny today are often ascriptions made up by the shipmasters to justify their own actions. Blakemore showed that sailors felt they had a right to object to a captain's decision concerning specific grievances or at pivotal moments during a voyage. Sailors did not believe themselves to be mutinous and often found support for their stance in court. Usually, a lawsuit was begun by sailors after a loss-making voyage and a refusal of paying wages. „Mutinous behaviour" was then used by their opponents in order to discredit the sailors' claims. As such, the term of mutiny appears to be as problematic as the concept of piracy, which was discussed in several of the previous papers.

Conference overview:

GREGOR ROHMANN (Frankfurt), Changing Semantics and Practice of Conflict Management in Late Medieval Northern Europe

Panel I: Maritime Spaces, Expansion and Conflict Management

BART HOLTERMAN (Bremerhaven), Conflict Management in the International Trade with the North Atlantic Islands

LOUIS SICKING (Amsterdam/Leiden),

REMCO VAN RHEE (Maastricht), Prize Law and Exploration. How 'Flemish' Fishermen put the English Search for a North-eastern Passage to Asia in Jeopardy in 1554

Panel II: The Emergence of Landscapes of Conflict Management

PHILIPP HÖHN (Halle), Shipwrecks, Churches and Maritime Conflict Management in the Baltic

TOBIAS BOESTAD (Paris/Stockholm), „Cut my hand off if they give you back your goods". Reclaiming Looted Property in the Eastern Baltic about 1300

THOMAS HEEBØLL-HOLM (Odense), Maritime Conflict and Kingdoms Compared: England and Denmark, c. 1375–c. 1415

FRIEDERIKE HOLST (Lübeck), Störtebeker & Consortium. Showcasing Maritime Conflicts in an Exhibition

Panel III: Competition, Cities and State Formation

JESÚS A. SOLÓRZANO TELECHEA (Santander), JOSÉ DAMIÁN GONZÁLEZ ARCRE (Murcia), The Resolution of Conflicts between Bilbao and Nantes at the End of the Middle Ages. From Letters of Marque and Reprisal to the Company of Safe Conduct

KILIAN BAUR (Eichstätt-Ingolstadt), About Legitimate and Illegitimate Seizure. Juridical and Diplomatic Conflict Resolution during and after the Wendish-Danish War, 1510–1512

JUSTYNA WUBS-MROZEWICZ (Amsterdam), Law, Diplomacy, Blackmail: Conflict Management in the Hollandish Salt Ship Case in Danzig, 1564–1567

Panel IV: Ships,Taverns and Ports. Conflict Management among Sailors, Merchants and Local Authorities

FREDERIK LYNGE VOGNSEN (Aarhus), Piracy and Prostitution. Crime, Conflicts and Sailors in Helsingør, 1549–1556

RICHARD BLAKEMORE (Reading), Managing Conflict between Deck, Dock, and Courtroom. Mariners, Merchants, and Mutiny in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

Tagungsbericht *Conflict Management in the Atlantic, the North Sea and the Baltic, 1200–1600: Actors, Institutions and Practices of Dispute Settlement*. 24.05.2019–25.05.2019, Amsterdam, in: H-Soz-Kult 04.09.2019.