

Simon Ekström & Leos Müller (eds.), *Facing the Sea: Essays in Swedish Maritime Studies*. Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2021. 295 pp., figures, notes. ISBN 978-91-89361-03-4; 235.00 SEK (hbk).

This anthology demonstrates how diverse the history of the sea can be. It also shows how fertile cooperation between universities and heritage institutions can be when formalised. The goal of the volume is to display the research undertaken by the Centre for Maritime Studies (CEMAS), a collaboration between Stockholm University and the Swedish National Maritime and Transport Museums. This is the second anthology coming from CEMAS, but the first in English and the hope is to introduce the Centre to a wider (Anglophone) audience. Progressing chronologically, the ten diverse chapters do well to underscore the depth of the centre's research, but this simultaneously sacrifices the volume's cohesiveness. In the words of the editors: the only thing linking the essays is that "they are all in some way about the sea" (9) and, one might add, bar one chapter, in some way about Sweden. This is clearly a broad general topic for a volume. The editors' make a strenuous attempt to link the different chapters closer together by identifying some mutual and narrower themes in the introduction – Death at sea, the boundary between lawful and unlawful and the distinction between land and sea – but even considering these similarities, there is quite a gap to bridge.

The volume covers topics such as maritime archery, a naval periodical's role in shaping Swedish national identity, the usage of the Swedish flag, sources and historiography of the *Vasa* (the famous shipwreck turned museum), smuggling in the twentieth century, what made the salvage of a wreck memorable, and reconsidering what constitutes maritime heritage and history through objects. Ultimately, the volume would have benefitted from a clearer theme or a stronger argument for what the advantage of not having one is. In lieu of one, it reads somewhat disjointed. A central part of the issue stems from the fact that few of the chapters addresses the sea as an overarching topic. Naturally, the sea is implicitly present in all of them, but one would expect a more explicit discussion of the role of the sea. Only two chapters discuss what the sea means to their respective topic. For the rest of the chapters the sea remains a canvas on which to place their topic.

A number of chapters in this volume focuses on traditional maritime history topics such as naval warfare, smuggling and trade patterns but frequently manages to add new angles or point to new questions. In 'Swedish Vessels in the Prize Papers' Leos Müller uses the exciting Prize Paper source – documents captured by the British Navy during the many wars in the early modern period – to shed light on the shipping routes used by Swedish merchant ships. Lacunae in the Swedish archives mean that it is not possible to recreate Swedish shipping routes in the eighteenth century and it is similarly difficult to appreciate the role tramping – sailing cargo between different ports without having fixed destinations – had in Swedish shipping. By using data from the Prize Papers, it is possible to answer old questions. In a similar vein, Anna Maria Forssberg encourages us to ask new questions concerning the people on board the *Vasa*. Considering that a ship with maybe as many as 150 people sank in plain sight in Stockholm, it is surprising that we still do not know more about the people on board. The ship itself eclipsed the human story. The essay points to the future; the research is yet to be done. In both essays, the hope is that the introduction of new sources as well as reinterpretation of old sources will deepen our understanding of maritime lives.

New sources and new interpretations are exciting, which becomes further evident in the essays that reconsiders the concept of maritime history and the materiality of maritime history. In the chapter 'Tommi the sea dog', Mirja Arnshav uses the case of toys that belonged to children and families

fleeing the Baltic States during the Second World War to consider which objects belong in a maritime museum and to consider the boundaries of maritime history. She invites the reader to view both maritime history and museum collections as processes in constant flux constructed as entangled elements (220). This helps to broaden the scope for constitutes maritime history and opens for opportunities to place the material history of children and toys in maritime contexts. Similarly, Hanna Jansson's chapter, 'Here, there and everywhere', examines how the sea is understood ambiguously as a fixed location and one of fluidity in connection with the disposal of ashes of loved ones. The chapter highlights how ash disposal at sea or at a lake, provides the bereaved with a specific location of the scattering while simultaneously ensuring that the remains will not remain at one place. The two chapters succeed in examining different aspects of humans' constantly evolving relationship with the sea and manages to point towards new venues for maritime history. Moreover, they demonstrate the value of strong ties between universities and heritage institutions.

As an introduction to the multifaceted research undertaken by CEMAS, the volume works well; the great diversity of essays means that there is something for everyone. Conversely, few will be interested in every essay or topic. The editors present the anthology as "a CEMAS smorgasbord of sea-related topics" (9). I accept the premise: Some pieces are tastier than others are. However, while everything is palatable (no surströmming here), some of the offerings are bland or not to my particular taste. Less curious gourmands might be turned off by the collection. Alas, just as I cannot expect everyone to share my taste for fried herring in vinegar, the editors cannot expect readers to be fascinated by every article in this collection; it is an acquired taste.

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