

Title + Abstract

Privateers, merchant ships and their crews between the Mediterranean and the North Sea during the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1714): new insights from Southern-Netherlandish Prize Papers

Our paper sheds new light on the early 18th century history of maritime trade connecting the North Sea area with the Mediterranean, via privateering and merchant ships sailing between the ports of Dunkirk and Ostend, and the Spanish ports of Cadiz and Alicante. While the history of early modern mercantile communities and trade networks connecting Spain and the Southern Netherlands has been well studied, our contribution aims at investigating the ships, their crews and the sea itself as elements enabling these connections.

This paper is based on 'Prize Papers' captured by British privateers from Spanish and Flemish ships during the War of the Spanish Succession, a hitherto unexplored source which gives a good account of these elements. As the history of maritime trade and privateering are inextricably linked during this period, these sources form a new window into the lives, identities, and conditions of merchants, crewmembers, ships and their cargo.

It will focus particularly on privateering ships and crew members, and the role played by Mediterranean captains and merchants. The cases presented in this paper form a prime example of the potential of these unexplored sources for collaborative research aimed towards global maritime connections in the early modern period.

Bio

VLIZ (Flanders Marine Institute, Belgium) recently initiated marine historical research with a project on the 18th century Southern Netherlandish Prize Papers. Wim De Winter has previously written on European maritime trade with Asia in the 17th and 18th century, and is now engaged in the 18th Century Prize Papers research at VLIZ. Michiel Vandegheuchte is VLIZ Research Director. Prof. dr. Michael Limberger is Associate Professor at Ghent University (Belgium), specialized in the fields of early modern maritime and commercial history, and has written on sixteenth-century Antwerp, and port cities. Dr. Jan Parmentier is curator of the maritime collections before 1830 at the MAS (Museum aan de Stroom, Antwerp).