

Bread and booze. Naval supply and early modern production

This article discusses the connection between naval supply needs, primarily bread and alcohol, and the transformation from small-scale to large-scale production during the early modern period. Three questions are addressed: the significance of the relationship between burghers and military representatives to this transformation; the significance of military experience, including military techniques, to this transformation; and, finally, whether or not early modern production can be linked to modern industrialization. Together, these questions can begin to answer the question about the connection between Sweden's military past and the shape of the nation's modern industrial and political landscape.

The establishment of the naval base Karlskrona in 1683 together with an incorporated city and a shipyard is the centre of the study. The region had been conquered from Denmark in 1658 and the burghers needed for the base were recruited from the nearby city of Ronneby. The burghers provided the state with access to the Baltic Sea trade network. Such dependence on the burghers implies that military and state administrators were willing to adapt to the burghers' world. This included the acceptance of a kind of early modern public sphere common in Baltic cities.

The period after the founding of Karlskrona was marked by repeated negotiations, disputes and severe production problems. The burghers could not always meet the growing demands of the Navy. This situation may have served as the incentive for the Navy to begin production of foodstuffs. In 1752, a Crown bakery was built, which produced 100,000 pieces of so-called "succarie" bread a day. The creation of a Crown distillery is another example of a state-operated manufacture. There are also examples of less successful ventures, such as the construction of a Crown water mill in the middle of the eighteenth century. Together these examples demonstrate the importance of military organization and the technical skills developed at the naval base, as well as the importance of an "institution" that could mobilize labour forces and economic resources, to early Swedish industrial production.

These examples can be seen as the Navy's answer to supply problems and also as a way of minimizing dependence on the burghers. They had a long-term impact on the Swedish economy. During the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century the region became the leading industrial producer of alcohol in Sweden and the leading grower of the potatoes needed for this industry.

Keywords: military production, military supply, bread, alcohol, trade networks, Baltic trade, public sphere, burghers