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The North European Way of Ransoming:
Explorations into an Unknown Dimension
of the Early Modern Welfare State

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Abstract: *»Die nordeuropäische Art des Gefangenenfreikaufs: Eine unbekann-te Dimension des frühmodernen Wohlfahrtsstaates«*. This article is concerned with distinctly "confessional" characteristics in the organization of buying back captured sailors out of Northern Africa. The history and ways of slave redemption of Hamburg, Lubeck, the Kingdom of Denmark-Norway and the Netherlands are presented, analyzed and compared. As a result it is possible to distinguish the comparatively prominent role that centralized, bureaucratized and governmentally administered institutions played in the ransoming business of the Lutheran world.

Keywords: white slavery, captivity, Barbary corsairs, welfare state, confessional mentality, imagined empathy.

Introduction

When in 1994, with the United Nations Development Report, the concept of "human security" was introduced into political discourse, the concept was exemplified in somewhat solemn words:

> In the final analysis, human security is a child who did not die, a disease that did not spread, a job that was not cut, an ethnic tension that did not explode in violence, a dissident who was not silenced. Human security is not a concern with weapons – it is a concern with human life and dignity.[1]

The most important change that the concept of "human security" is expected to bring is the departure from a narrow perspective of security. It is meant as a *global* and *people-centered* security concept that is expressly set in contrast to the traditional focus on *state security*.[2] Even though the concept is clearly meant to be used for problems of our time, the universal aim of prevention of human suffering as the ultimate goal is certainly not a novelty in itself. This is

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[1] Human Development Report 1994, 22.
[2] Human Development Report 1994, 23.

acknowledged by important authors on "human security", who see this concept as being rooted in history with its origins going back to Greek antiquity.[3]

For a historian it is tempting to elaborate on this point and to look more deeply at the historical dimension of "human security", i.e. the origins and the development of the emphasis on the individual's rights. One contribution was made in 2007, when the historian Lynn Hunt argued that the reason why human rights gained such importance in the 18th century was a growing "imagined empathy" of large parts of the society for suffering individuals, a development that she sees at this time as peculiar to the Western world.[4] The equality of human beings was stressed more and more and as a consequence, the state and other institutions were increasingly regarded as providers and protectors of these rights. The idea of "imagined empathy" has not yet gained widespread currency and its connection with an increasing insistence on basic human rights is rarely found in the existing literature. At this point, the concept of "imagined empathy" therefore remains vague and unspecific.

It is here that this article aims to contribute. I will try to exemplify the phenomenon of "imagined empathy" with a certain subject within to a certain subject in history and try to connect it to a directly related "production of human security". In order to do so, a definition is needed beforehand: Wherever we see in history a phenomenon where suffering of individuals leads towards recognizable actions of large group-systems with the goal of reducing or removing the origins of this suffering, we may speak of a form of "production of human security" *avant la lettre*. With this definition at hand, "imagined empathy" becomes specifiable in the concrete modes of security production for individuals organized by larger groups. In the following article I will try to give an example of this by examining a very specific form of "production of human security" and connecting it with the mentality of distinguishable group-systems.

I. The Problems of the Barbary Corsairs
for Northern Europe

For over 300 years (roughly ~1520-1830), the so-called "Barbary pirates", Muslim corsairs operating from the present-day Maghreb states, cruised in the waters of Southern Europe and posed a serious danger towards Christian Europe. The ships of all European nations came under threat as soon as they operated in a zone comprising the entire Mediterranean and the Atlantic, within a sector that reached from Cape Finisterre in the north to the Canary Islands in the south-west. Because the southbound ships of Northern Europe were usually

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[3] MacFarlane and Khong 2006, 19-60.
[4] Hunt 2007, 32-69.

the largest of their time, carrying a cargo of great value and making exchanges between two distinct geographical zones, the profitability of this branch of shipping was exceptionally high. Therefore, many merchants of all nations were attracted and consequently had to deal with the problem of the Muslim corsairs.

One of the most pressing aspects of this conflict for contemporaries was the high number of Europeans who found themselves imprisoned in Northern Africa. A flood of letters pleading for rescue emanated from Northern African cities and found its way to concerned relatives in all parts of Europe. These letters and actively petitioning relatives were a heavy burden on the conscience of the merchants and the governmental authorities, both of whom benefited most from the trade with Southern Europe.

During the Early Modern epoch, all important continental Northern nations were at some time heavily involved in long-distance trade with Southern Europe. The two most prominent Early Modern German harbor cities, Hamburg and Lubeck, began to conduct this trade in large quantities in the last third of the 16th century. The northern Netherlands were able to inherit the rich trade connections of Flanders and Brabant after the beginning of the Dutch revolt and after 1590 began to appear in great numbers in the Mediterranean. Denmark, in contrast, did not organize a trade beyond Cape Finisterre on a considerable scale before the beginning of the 18th century, but was then quickly able to catch up with its competitors.[5] The two Hanseatic cities, the Netherlands and Denmark consequently all had to deal with the problem of incarceration of their sailors in Northern Africa.

In the following, I will elaborate on the reactions this problem triggered in Northern Europe and try to connect the findings with confessional characteristics. Put more abstractly: The relation between a confessional mentality and its embedding in institutions charged with a specific production of human security are the main subject of this article. I will argue that the answer to the question "Why did states dominated by the Lutheran or Calvinist creed react towards this problem in the specific way they did?" can give us profound insights into the "imagined empathy" of the respective confessions. In order to make this claim, I will follow a step-by-step approach. First, I will briefly present an overview of the history of Catholic ransoming. Then, I will describe the discourse and practice of ransoming in the Hanseatic cities, Denmark and the Netherlands but with the important reservation that I will only look at the most important level of this business, the governmental layer.[6] Finally, I will inter-

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[5] For an overview of the southern trade of the Hanseatic cities see: Beutin 1933, 1-58. For Denmark see: Degn and Gøbel 1997, 130-141. For the Netherlands see: Bruijn 1977.
[6] Below the governmental level we find all over Europe a wide array of brotherhoods or local institutions pledged to this business, which shall not be regarded here.

pret the findings with the help of current research in the sociology of welfare states and try to put the entire business of ransom into a broader perspective.

II. The Origins and Practice of Ransoming
in the Mediterranean

With the intensification of the "petite guerre"[7] between Muslims and Christians during the 16th century, the numbers of captives in Northern Africa swelled to disproportionate sizes.[8] Even if the number of 1.25 million Christian slaves in the Barbary states which a historian has put forward[9] may be "fantasmatique"[10], the great dimensions of this problem for the Mediterranean world cannot be doubted. With the foundation of the "Santa Casa della Redenzione dei Cattivi" in Naples in 1548, the state stepped in for the first time on the Italian peninsula to organize the ransoming independently from the religious orders. Soon, the other important Italian territorial states followed suit and founded governmentally controlled bodies to organize the ransoming of their own nationals. Venice gave its "Provveditori sopra Ospedali e Luoghi Pii" the control of ransoming in 1586[11] and Genoa opened its "Magistrato per il riscatto degli Schiavi" in 1597[12]; other Italian states did the same in the second half of the 16th century.[13] In Spain, in contrast, the Trinitarians were able to dominate the ransoming throughout the Early Modern Era.[14] One of the most eminent historians on the Barbary corsairs, Salvatore Bono, thus distinguishes between two Catholic ways of ransoming: The monastic orders operated in the larger Catholic monarchies and the Case di redenzione worked "quasi esclusivamente" in Italy.[15]

What were the main features of these two models? In both cases, the incomes derived not from obligatory duties, but from donations or bequests collected by clerics of the Catholic Church. Operating on a grand scale with close proximity to the field of action, these institutions seem to have been rather professional at conducting their business. Yet, whereas a Casa di redenzione operated directly on behalf of the home state, the orders retained more independence in their ransoming activities. At the moment, it seems that the orders were the more effective ransomers within the Mediterranean. Even if the number of over 100,000 redeemed captives, which a historian has put forward for

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[7] Panzac 2009, 55.
[8] Heers 2001, 246.
[9] Davis 2001.
[10] Panzac 2009, 129-140. He arrives at the number of 180,000 white slaves in the period from 1574-1644.
[11] Davis 2002, 456.
[12] Lucchini 1990.
[13] Davis 2003, 150.
[14] Friedman 1983.
[15] Bono 1993, 204.

the Trinitarians,[16] might be exaggerated, their efficacy of ransoming cannot be doubted. However, this large number cannot conceal the great problems that the Catholic world had in ransoming their brethren. From a detailed study of four ransoming missions from 1660-1666, we learn that the average duration of captivity of a Catholic in Northern Africa was, due to lack of funds, four to five years.[17]

III. The Governmental Institutions of Ransom in the Cities of Hamburg and Lubeck

The weakness or often total absence of orders in the Protestant world after the Reformation forestalled the activity of redemptionist orders in Northern Europe. Alms-collecting by relatives of the captives to finance the ransom was the obvious recourse of which we have the first notice in the year 1547 in the city of Danzig.[18] For the following 70 years, this was the usual recourse in the entire northern German world. It sufficed as long as the numbers of captives remained small. After the beginning of the Dutch uprising against their Spanish overlords in 1568, however, the southbound trade of Lubeck and Hamburg soared. Thus, in the last third of the 16th century, for the first time large numbers of Germans found themselves caught in Northern Africa. The problem got out of hand in the last decade of the 16th century when alms-collecting no longer proved adequate to buy the large numbers of captives back. The average duration of captivity grew longer, the number of letters begging for rescue increased. In the first decade of the 17th century, we see brotherhoods of sailors intervening in the Hanseatic cities and paying for ransom, because the alms collections no longer sufficed.

With the renewal of fighting between the Dutch and the Spanish after 1621, the Hanseatic trade to Iberia and the Mediterranean experienced another great rise, which coincided with the greatest Muslim corsair activity ever seen.[19] The ensuing clash led to the largest number of Germans ever caught by Muslim corsairs. Only one year after the fighting had recommenced, the captains and officers of the Hamburg ships founded the "Stück-von-Achten-Kasse", a fraternity pledged to the redemption of its members. Membership was on a voluntary basis but was restricted to captains and ship officers.[20] Thus, the lower deck found itself abandoned and left to the risk of having to remain in Muslim bondage without the least bit of hope of being rescued. Since the ordinary

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[16] Dams 1985, 148.
[17] Larquie 1991, 82.
[18] Rühle 1925, 111-112.
[19] Panzac 2009, 133-135.
[20] Kresse 1981, 38-39.

sailors mostly came from the poorer parts of society, the necessary ransom sums were in all likelihood never payable by their relatives.

At this point the state stepped in and took on responsibility for its subjects. An institution was founded, which can be called, with some justification, the first obligatory social insurance in the world. In May 1624, after some months of debate within the governing apparatus and with the society of the shipmen, the Hamburger Sklavenkasse was created.[21] It was an office administered by the Hamburg Admiralty, which had the duty to collect from every sailor and respective shipowner a fixed amount of money if the ship had a destination west of the Netherlands. This money was to be used to buy back captives from Northern Africa. The basic principle of the Sklavenkasse was to eliminate the risk of captivity by transforming it to a fiscal fee shared by all risk-bearers. The message of the government to its sailors was clear: you will be safe in southern waters, you are protected by your state regardless of the perils which wait for you there, even if the worst happens and you get caught by the Muslim enemy.

Soon after the foundation of the Hamburg Sklavenkasse, Lubeck followed with its own Sklavenkasse in 1627.[22] Immediately after their foundation both institutions came under heavy financial pressure from the exacting demands of the situation in the southern waters. This often led to a lack of funds and resulted several times during their first years in the inability to pay for the redemption.[23] Nevertheless, the Sklavenkassen continued their business even when an ever-increasing number of captives had to be ransomed. Because the profits in this trade at this specific time of war were very large, a merchant class prone to engage in profitable risks would not let itself be stopped even by intense corsair activity, and continued to send large numbers of ships southwest.

The port cities of Hamburg and Lubeck were two of very few places in Europe which could maintain their neutrality throughout the entire Thirty Years' War. Their shipping was thus able to penetrate deep down southward during this conflict and provide the cities with large revenues. One can regard it as a sign of steadfast Hanseatic loyalty that the two founding cities of the old league allowed their twin institutions to share the burden of ransoming by giving money to the respective Sklavenkasse in case of need. Yet, even this sharing of burdens did not suffice to finance the tolls which the intense war with the corsairs put on the Sklavenkassen. Their income basis needed to be enlarged quite early after their foundation. The Lubeck Sklavenkasse had to be

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[21] Baasch 1897, 202-212.
[22] Wehrmann 1884, 161-162.
[23] Beutin 1933, 40-41.

reformed only two years after its start, in 1629.[24] Hamburg followed suit in 1641.[25]

Before these reforms, apart from the money which the Sklavenkassen obtained from collections in the churches, the individual crew members had to pay the lion's share for these institutions. After 1629 in Lubeck and 1641 in Hamburg, the shipowners were obliged to contribute substantial sums according to the load a ship carried and its destination. The closer the destination was to the Barbary corsairs, the higher the rate that was to be paid. Thus, we have three different sources of income for the German Sklavenkassen. The first one was provided by the crew members: they had to pay a high percentage of their income if the ship's destination lay west or south-west of Brest and only half of this rate for the "safer" destinations east of Brest.[26] The next source came from the shipowners according to shipload and a division of the map into risk zones; and a third one were the always ongoing alms collections.

Until 1750 both institutions remained under great strain to pursue the ransoming. In the 14 "hot" years from 1615-1629, the smaller of the two cities, Lubeck, lost at least 22 large ships to the corsairs.[27] In the relatively "calm" 28 years between 1719 and 1747 we know of 50 Hamburgian ships which got caught by the corsairs; this meant captivity in Northern Africa for 633 sailors.[28] It should be noted that this number of captives is more than thrice that of Denmark during the same time, which gives a good hint at the respective size of Hamburg's and Denmark's southbound trade in these years. Apart from the 1,809,200 Mark Lübisch, which Hamburg had to pay for ransom, the loss of the precious ships was disastrous for a single city, even of the size of Hamburg. After 1750, it rarely happened to a German ship to get caught by the corsairs since German shipping to Southern Europe had been much reduced owing to heavy competition of states which had peace treaties with the regencies[29] and because the corsair activity had decreased sharply.

The Hamburg Sklavenkasse ceased to exist in 1810; Lubeck's Sklavenkasse was closed in 1861.[30] Both offices underwent some fundamental reforms in the 18th century which greatly changed their modes of operation. Regardless of these reforms, the fundamental structure always remained the same, i.e. the production of human security, assured by obligatory payments coming from crew members and shipowners. For nearly 200 years, these institutions ensured that almost no sailor who served on Hamburg or Lubeck ships and got caught

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[24] Wehrmann 1884, 162-166.
[25] Baasch 1897, 212-215.
[26] In contrast to Lubeck, sailors from Hamburg did not have to pay for destinations east of the Scheldt, see: Baasch 1897, 213.
[27] Wehrmann 1884, 167.
[28] Baasch 1897, 237.
[29] Beutin 1933, 58-59.
[30] Wehrmann 1884, 193.

by the corsairs had to remain in North African captivity. Their success in this endeavor was so remarkable that in 1754 the Hamburg senate could publicly and triumphantly put into print that due to the work of the Sklavenkasse

> *all* slaves caught from our ships who had been captives in Algiers had been *completely* ransomed and were given back their freedom.[31]

This is in essence what the German Sklavenkassen had always tried to be: the providers of nothing less than *absolute human* security for all of Hamburg's and Lubeck's sailors. This had been their foremost goal and it had been, at tremendous cost, nearly always attained.

IV. The Governmental Institutions of Ransom in Denmark

Denmark intermittently sent out some ships to southern waters during the 17th century. In general, it seems that Denmark could not effectively compete with Dutch, English or German shipping. This was in all likelihood not due to the several wars in which Denmark was involved, but rather to the underdeveloped state of its shipping industry and, probably, a lack of mercantile thinking at the governmental level in the first half of the 17th century.[32] A noticeable increase can be remarked during the last decade of the 17th century, when the rest of Europe was at war and the two Nordic states maintained their neutrality.[33]

Even though its shipping remained limited during the 17th century, Denmark was sometimes faced with the problem of Danish sailors in captivity in Northern Africa. The obvious recourse was, like in the rest of Europe, to alms collections.[34] This sufficed as long as the shipping to Southern Europe remained comparatively small. After the failure to redeem hundreds of Icelanders[35] it seems that better measures were demanded. In 1634 therefore, when Copenhagen's Skipperlav[36] was inaugurated, we find in its articles the obligation to collect money from all sailors to buy back sailors from Northern Africa. This Skipperlav resembled in some regards the German Sklavenkassen. There was the element of obligatory membership, but only for the ships' officers:

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[31] Hamburger Staatsarchiv, 111-1 Senat Cl. VII Lit. Ca. No. 2 Vol. 3 Fasc. 7, No. 11.

[32] Nielsen 1933, 272-284.

[33] Ekegård 1924, 67-78; Degn and Gøbel 1997, 131.

[34] Fossen 1979, 235-239.

[35] After the raid on Iceland in 1627 with a capture of roughly 400 inhabitants, collections were the recourse of the Kingdom of Denmark-Norway to buy back the captives. See: Helgason 1997, 275-276; Andersen 2000, 41-42. However, these measures failed to a large extent: Fossen 1979, 240-241.

[36] The Skipperlav was a semi-public organization of the sailors of the capital, which fulfilled many governmental tasks and had considerable executive power.

Article 4: All Merchant-skippers and steersmen, which are based or live here in the city, shall be or are obliged to betake themselves into this Guild.[37]

Even though the money for the Skipperlav came only from its members, i.e. the higher decks, its duties included the ransom of all sailors of a ship taken:

Article 10: All money, which incurs into this Skippers-Guild, shall be used for these members, which either by Turks or religious enemies have been captured and ransomed. Crews of poor ships-brothers from this guild, as well as sick or injured shall also be helped.[38]

We are presented with the curious situation of an organization where the income base was smaller than that of the Sklavenkassen in the Hanse cities, even though its duties were the same and even far greater (they included many tasks in and around the harbor of Copenhagen). This can be explained by the rarity of Copenhagen ships taken by Barbary corsairs. Thus, the organization was theoretically equivalent to the German Sklavenkassen, but not in substance. Whereas the Sklavenkassen were under tremendous strain to ransom their sailors from the first day after their foundation, the Skipperlav was not seriously tested for the greater part of the 17th century. It seems that most Danish ships that were caught in the 17th century came from Bergen, where a special fee existed since 1653 for the freeing of slaves from Africa.[39]

In the years from 1670-1680, important changes took place in the patterns of shipping throughout Europe. French corsairs effectively reduced German and Dutch shipping to southern waters, much more than the Barbary corsairs had ever been able to. Danish shipping could not be hit hard, not having had great relevance south-west of Great Britain until then. Thus, the competitors were weakened just at the time when Danish shipping became the object of more and more support from the governmental side. The creation of the Kommercekolleg in 1668/71 in Copenhagen signaled the rapid advent of mercantilist thinking in Denmark, which translated into an ever-increasing commerce fleet.[40] Consequently, in these years we find more mentions of captured vessels from the Kingdom.

In 1675, the Skipperlavs' income base was broadened. Now, the ordinary sailors, though not allowed membership, also had to pay into its coffers exactly half the rate of the ship's officers.[41] And in 1685, this was again extended: After this year Danish sailors not living in Copenhagen also had to pay if their ship sailed from the city.[42] After these changes the institution resembled the first German Sklavenkassen before the reforms of 1629 and 1641. One obliga-

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[37] Hassø 1934, 13.
[38] Hassø 1934, 15.
[39] Fossen 1979.
[40] Hassø 1934, 25.
[41] Hassø 1934, 40-44.
[42] Bro-Jørgensen 1935, 65.

tory institution was responsible for the safety of all sailors on the ships of the city of Copenhagen. Because Europe was embroiled in huge wars after 1687 and Denmark kept its neutrality for most of the time, the Dannebrog could advance further and further south in the years around 1700.[43] This in turn led to more captives who needed ransoming. As a result, in the last decade of the 17th century, we see a ransoming activity of one or two Danish sailors per year.[44]

At the turn of the century, this decentralized system of ransoming failed, when it became really demanding for the first time. In 1706 the armed frigate "St. Christopher" from Bergen was caught by Barbary corsairs and more than 40 Danish sailors found themselves caught at once after having fought with great courage.[45] Already in 1708, another Norwegian ship, the "Fortuna" from Drammen got caught by Algerian Corsairs. Four years later, in 1712, more than 26 Danish sailors still remained in bondage, when two large Norwegian ships, the "Jomfru Anna" from Bergen and the "Ebentzer" from Arendal, were captured by the corsairs. These events again swelled the numbers of the King's subjects in Northern Africa. At this point, it became obvious that the traditional ways of coping with this problem could no longer suffice. Collections in the entire kingdom did not bring in enough money and Bergen itself was overstretched to conduct the ransoming of its ships' crews on its own.[46] Copenhagen's Skipperlav had sufficient funds, but it lacked the will to use them for the Norwegian ships' crews and it lacked professionalism in conducting its task. A special institution, led by experts with connections to a network of merchants spread throughout Europe, was needed. This institution should have its only duty in organizing the ransom of the Danish captives from Northern Africa.

The model which was now imitated was the one the southern neighbors of Denmark had by then already used successfully for decades. A Sklavenkasse was to be founded.[47] The King personally ordered its creation, following the advice of Sealand's Bishop, Christian Worm.[48] It was to be led by the Bishop and two well-connected merchants from the capital, Abraham Klöcher and Johan Jørgen Soelberg.

In one of their first letters to the magistrate of Copenhagen, the new board immediately liquidated the old ineffectual heritage of the skipperlav, explicitly stating in scathing words that they had

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[43] Degn and Gøbel 1997, 89.
[44] Hassø 1934, 81.
[45] Møller 1998, 105.
[46] Møller 1998, 108.
[47] Called "Slavekasse" in Denmark
[48] Bro-Jørgensen 1935, 159-160.

heard that the money, which the skipperlav has collected according to its 16 articles, has swelled to a great and sufficient capital, without any captives having been ransomed in a long time (one or another excepted).[49]

The skipperlav had failed even in its core task, the ransoming of sailors from Copenhagen. Therefore, the new board demanded all the money from the skipperlav reserved for the business of ransoming, which it quickly received. Within a few weeks, a network of ransom was established with its financial hubs in Hamburg and Amsterdam and the German merchant, Johannes Pommer in Venice, as its key contact person, managing the business of ransom in the Mediterranean itself.[50]

Already before the foundation of the Slavekasse a list of 82 subjects of the Danish King who were languishing in Northern Africa had been compiled.[51] With the beginning of its business in April 1715, the board decided to ransom only the captives who had served on Danish ships when they had been caught.[52] Of these, eight could already be ransomed in just seven months, and 23 more were freed in the following year.[53]

The Danish Slavekasse drew its income from the same sources as the German Sklavenkassen; yet in the Kingdom the burden was much higher for the shipowners and much lower for the sailors. All ships which sailed to Holland, England, France, Spain, or Portugal had to pay three shillings per last directly to the Slavekasse (in Hamburg the shipowners only had to pay two thirds of this rate). Also, all sailors of the entire Kingdom were obliged to pay to the Slavekasse (in Hamburg the sailors had to pay three times as much). It is interesting to remark these sailor-friendly rates in the monarchy and the shipowner-friendly rates in the trade-cities. Additionally, biannual collections in the churches throughout the Kingdom also brought revenue for the Slavekasse.

Thus, we see after 1715/16 three fully-functioning Sklavenkassen in Hamburg, Lubeck and Denmark, each one closely resembling its sister institutions. All Sklavenkassen were remarkably efficient, with almost no cases of captivity in Northern Africa of an insured sailor lasting longer than one year. Like its German counterparts, the Danish Slavekasse had always tried to be the provider of *absolute* security for Danish sailors on Danish ships. We can legitimately conclude: It attained this goal at most times of its existence.

The Danish Slavekasse existed until 1757. After Denmark had made its last peace treaty with a Maghreb state, i.e. Morocco in 1753, there was no longer a

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[49] Landsarkivet Sjælland, EA-001, Stifts Bispeembede, Kopibog for udgående breve vedr. Slavekassen. 15.5.1715 – Slavekassen til Magistrat i Kiöbenhavn.
[50] Landsarkivet Sjælland, EA-001, Stifts Bispeembede, Kopibog for udgående breve vedr. Slavekassen. 20.4.1715 – Slavekassen til Johannes Pommer i Venedig.
[51] Møller 1998, 108.
[52] Bro-Jørgensen 1935, 160.
[53] Landsarkivet Sjælland, EA-001, Stifts Bispeembede, Kopibog for udgående breve vedr. Slavekassen. 30.12.1716 – Slavekassen til Kongen.

need to insure Danish sailors against the risk of Muslim captivity. For the Slavekasse, the only tasks remaining were the ransom of the last Danish captives and the unwinding of its business. During over forty years of its existence, the Slavekasse had not only ransomed well over two hundred Danish sailors from captivity[54], it had also initiated and financed[55] the first peace talks with the Barbary rulers, which in 1746 had brought Denmark the long sought-after peace treaty with Algiers. It had thus worked as a kind of "Ministry for Barbary affairs".

V. The Governmental Institutions of Ransom in the Netherlands

After having inherited the merchants and thus the know-how and trade routes from Antwerp, Amsterdam became the center of the 17th century world economy.[56] The common enmity of the Netherlands and Algiers against Spain helped the Dutch in the two decades after 1590 to liberate captured sailors from Algiers more easily and ensured a certain benevolence for Dutch ships.[57]

With the beginning of the 12-year truce in 1609, the Netherlanders had a breakthrough into the Mediterranean.[58] In 1611 they were able to obtain a treaty with the Ottoman Emperor and to install an ambassador at Constantinople. It was hoped at The Hague that this would also ensure safety for Dutch ships from attacks from the North African corsairs. Yet the respect for orders from the Sultan was not too high at Algiers and the Dutch cease-fire with Spain irritated Algiers. Thus in the decade from 1610-1620, more and more Netherlanders found themselves on the slave-markets of Algiers. It was decided at The Hague to conclude a treaty with the regency and install a consul there. The consul Wijnant de Keyser arrived in 1616 at Algiers and immediately began ransoming all Dutch slaves at the place. He used governmental funds for this business, expecting the States-General to pay for the liberation of the sailors. Yet, in this point he miscalculated. In 1618, the States-General expressly forbade him to continue ransoming with governmental money, officially stating that the state was only responsible for the sailors on warships, not for the sailors on merchant ships.[59]

Hereby the States-General set a precedent which would remain valid for more than a century to come. It took the Netherlands until 1726 to obtain a

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[54] The most eminent historian of the Danish Slavekassen has counted 224 ransomed slaves from 1715-1753, in: Bro-Jørgensen 1935, 161-163.
[55] Wandel 1919, 5-9; Andersen 2000, 37-54.
[56] Israel 1989, 38-42.
[57] van Krieken 2002, 16-19.
[58] Israel 1986, 164-169.
[59] van Krieken 2002, 23.

stable peace treaty with Algiers and even longer to get one with Morocco. Therefore, Dutch ships were constantly being captured in the 17th and at the beginning of the 18th century. A historian has arrived at a number of 6,000-7,000 Netherlanders who may have at some time been captives in Northern Africa.[60] The ransoming of the Netherlanders was normally carried out by the single provinces and these in turn financed it mostly through collections, lotteries and money from relatives.[61] On a national level, several nationwide collections were held in the aftermath of peace accords for this purpose.[62] On several occasions, wholesale expeditions with squadrons of warships were sent out to do the ransoming, always with explicit orders to catch as many North Africans as possible in order to exchange them for their Dutch counterparts in the regencies.[63]

All these measures never sufficed. Algerians were hard to catch and the exchange rate of prisoners was disadvantageous for the Netherlanders. The great problem of voluntary donations was their irregularity, in stark contrast to the permanent collections in Denmark and the Hanse cities. Due to scarcity of funds, it was explicitly decided in 1663 to only ransom Netherlanders, not Scandinavians or Germans who had served on Dutch ships.[64] Yet, even for Netherlanders, the money available was never enough. It has been estimated that the quota of Netherlanders ever ransomed was 33-50%.[65] This percentage is much lower than the quota in Hamburg, Lubeck or Denmark, which ranged between 80 and 90%.[66]

At times the creation of a national Sklavenkasse was seriously deliberated. For example, in 1717 the powerful province of Holland tried to push through the foundation of a Sklavenkasse, modeled after the Hamburgian, in the assembly of the States-General.[67] It did not succeed with this because the other provinces – Zeeland is explicitly named – opposed the proposal for the following reasons:

1) The corsairs would be encouraged to cruise even more if the Dutch Republic guaranteed all its sailors their ransom.
2) The prices for captives would soar, thus buying back through private means would become more difficult.

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[60] van Krieken 2002, 131.
[61] Ridder 1986, 5-12.
[62] Ridder 1986, 12.
[63] Ridder 1986, 16-17.
[64] van Krieken 2002, 62.
[65] van Krieken 2002, 139.
[66] This figure has been established for the Danish Slavekasse and is in all likelihood also valid for the German Sklavenkassen: Bro-Jørgensen 1935, 161.
[67] van Krieken 2002, 93.

3) The North African rulers would lose interest in a peace with the Nether-
lands, because a state with a Sklavenkasse is a source of revenue for the cor-
sairs.

4) The sailors would no longer defend themselves adequately if they were
assured of their later ransom.[68]

The last reason is especially noteworthy. In all openness it was stated that
the terribly feared slavery in Northern Africa was helpful for the commercial
interests of the republic's shipping. This gruesome image put enough scare into
the sailors to fight to the last and thus to defend the ship and the cargo better.
The value of *human security* was explicitly put below *security of the economy*.
The United Provinces decided not to intervene and to retain their insufficient
system which left the ransoming to local initiatives, voluntary contributions
and family members.

The Dutch ransoming system seems to have been on the verge of a funda-
mental change after 1730. In 1728, after the stable peace with Algiers had been
attained, the States-General decided to ransom all remaining 256 slaves who
had been taken on ships from the republic, be they from the Netherlands or
from foreign countries.[69] Even after this decision, it took another seven years
until the last one of these was liberated. From 1728 until 1736 and from 1743
until 1749, two pastors from the Netherlands were appointed in Algiers to take
care of the slaves from the Netherlands, Germany and Scandinavia.[70] At this
time a Sklavenkasse was also founded in Zierikzee, which lasted from 1732
until 1747.[71] From that year on (1747), the States-General finally accepted the
duty of the entire state to buy back all its subjects from Northern Africa.[72]
When in 1755 the long-sought peace with Morocco was finally achieved, the
Netherlands from then on no longer needed to use governmental money to
ransom their brethren. Had the peace treaties not been attained, the ransom
system of the Sklavenkassen might have been introduced.

VI. Typologies of North European Ransom

What are we to make of these observations? We have looked at several promi-
nent Early Modern maritime states which all had to deal with the problem of
captivity of their own subjects on a large scale and their institutional reactions
towards the problem. Three of these states have in common that they created
governmental offices to collect funds from their sailors and shipowners and

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[68] Nationaal Archief Den Haag, 1.01.03 – Staten Generaal, 3392, 06.07.1717.
[69] Van Krieken 2002, 103. Krieken states that this happened more to ensure the peace with Algiers than out of compassion for the captives.
[70] Van Krieken 2002, 137.
[71] Ridder 1986, 13-15.
[72] Ridder 1986, 14.

used these funds to buy back their subjects out of Northern African captivity. We may summarize our findings in a simplified table:

Northern European Ransoming Systems	Denmark, Hamburg, Lubeck	Netherlands
Number of captives in Northern Africa from 1590-1830	5-8000[73]	6-7000[74]
Money for ransom	Progressive taxation of the group concerned, additional alms collections	Mostly alms collections, only little help from the state
Organization of ransom	Mostly state-run, centralized	Mostly privately, decentralized
Average duration of captivity	Mostly less than one year[75]	Three to five years[76]
Quota of redeemed captives	80-90 %[77]	33-50 %[78]

Many numbers in this table are certainly highly debatable. Yet, even if we allow for a substantial error range, the basic and fundamental differences between the two blocs remain the same. One group created professional organizations dedicated to the ransoming of their own nation's sailors only, and these institutions, everywhere called Sklavenkassen, were financed by obligatory duties imposed upon the endangered group. The other bloc decided expressly and repeatedly not to do so, even though the problem here was more or less the same, qualitatively and quantitatively. The lack of such organizations in the Netherlands had dire consequences for the Netherlanders captured in Northern Africa. Longer periods of slavery and a high uncertainty of an eventual ransom were direct consequences of the refusal of the state to intervene and to take the entire business into its hands.

How are we to explain the refusal of the Netherlanders to install a Sklavenkasse, even though this had dramatic consequences for its sailors? Is it due to the very different naval power of the two blocs? Being the center of the world economy until and beyond 1726, when they finally concluded a lasting peace with the Algerians, the Netherlanders always had very different means at hand to take on the corsair enemy. The naval power of the Hanse cities was marginal in comparison with the United Provinces. The idea of naval power as a deterrent of Sklavenkassen gains plausibility if we look at Denmark's Slavekasse. It

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[73] The wide range is due to the insufficient data available, especially in the cases of the German Sklavenkassen. Yet, the figure with its two limits is the result of intense calculation and taking into account of all available numbers and therefore reliable.
[74] Van Krieken 2002, 131.
[75] See footnote 66.
[76] Boon 1987, 18-19.
[77] Only "national" sailors are taken into account, e.g. Hamburgians on Hamburg ships etc.
[78] Van Krieken 2002, 139.

was founded in 1715, when its naval power was rather weak and the institution ended with the ascent of Denmark's naval power after the mid-18th century. The Danish case seems to confirm the thesis of incompatibility of Sklavenkassen with a strong navy.

Yet, naval power is not a very important factor in the decision process about Sklavenkassen. For one thing, naval expeditions against the corsairs were in most of the cases blatant failures. Only the British and French expeditions in the late 17th century had achieved their aims. But these were the exceptions to the general rule. The Dutch expeditions of 1618-20, 1655-56, 1662, 1664, 1670 and 1721-24 were all costly and only partly effective at attaining their goal.[79] In the end, The Hague had to accept a peace treaty in which permanent tributes were stipulated, in contrast to the tribute-free peace treaties which England and France were able to attain.

But even more to the point, why should naval power stand in contradiction to state-organized ransoming? The historical evidence simply does not support such an imagined dichotomy. A state with a powerful navy like Great Britain had its "Algiers-duty", very much resembling a Sklavenkasse, to finance the ransoming of its subjects.[80] When in 1720 a "Project tot het ruineeren der Turkze Rovers" was put forward in the Netherlands, it was explicitly stated in one of its articles that a Sklavenkasse should flank the massive naval attack on the corsairs.[81] Thus, governmentally organized ransoming and a strong navy within one state are not contradictions. They could and did come together, one could and did exist without the other or both could and often were absent. In the minds of the decision-makers they were to a large measure independent of each other.

Are the observed differences due to the political structure of the states in question? The two Hanse cities were small political units, where a Sklavenkasse could easily be introduced by and for limited groups. The entire cities being very dependent on the trade towards southern waters, it was easy to convince all decision-makers of the advantages of Sklavenkassen for all people of the cities. This was not so in Denmark-Norway, where the trade routes went to a large degree east and northwards when the Slavekasse was introduced. Yet, in the absolute monarchy of Denmark-Norway, the decision-making process could at times be very easy. It took one memorandum from Sealand's Bishop to the King to get the Slavekasse going, without any amendment.[82] With a different political structure we may well believe that Denmark-Norway would have gone the same way that the Netherlands did. Here, a central government with limited powers could only act in accord with the provinces. In an absolute

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[79] Van Krieken 2002, 26, 53-55, 57-67, 94-97.
[80] On the Algiers-duty: Matar 2005, 38-75.
[81] *Project tot het ruineeren der Turkze Rovers [...]* 1720.
[82] Bro-Jørgensen 1935, 159-160.

monarchy, this opposition could be overcome, which was not so in a republic with independently-minded constituent parts.

However, it is precisely this observation that allows us to rule out the different political structures as the causator of the (non-)introduction of Sklavenkassen. The political structure was certainly important on the national level, where the decentralized Netherlands could not agree upon a foundation of a Sklavenkasse. Yet, at the local level the differences between the two blocs still remain. In Copenhagen after 1634, we have a de facto Sklavenkasse in the form of the Skipperlav with its obligatory duties and its responsibility to ransom Copenhagen's sailors. It would have been very easy for the single provinces or cities in the Netherlands to introduce Sklavenkassen at the local level. Yet, the only Sklavenkasse that ever existed in the Netherlands was the local one at Zierikzee, a short-lived and very late foundation. Amsterdam, Middelburg and other great cities never had a Sklavenkasse, even though it would have been very easy to found one. The political structure of the large Dutch harbor cities was very much comparable to Hamburg and Lubeck. In all these cities the power lay in the hands of the richer merchants and the emerging bourgeoisie. The same groups of power-holders easily founded Sklavenkassen in the cities east of the Elbe and refused to do so west of the Elbe. Thus a political structure did not stand in the way of a foundation of Sklavenkassen in the Netherlands.

VII. The Combination of Historical "Facts" and Sociological "Theory"

After having refuted the more simple explanation for the found typologies, we are still left without a satisfying answer for the discrepancy of the ransoming modes. A more complex model is needed as explanandum for the differences in the organization of ransoming of the two blocs. This shall be done by setting the established typology in a broader perspective and then analyzing it anew. The entire phenomenon of slave ransoming has to be regarded not as something exceptional but structural for the affected maritime societies. The ransoming of Europeans was an affair so stable that we can regard it as an integral part of *Early Modern welfare*. Like the poor, the group of the slaves to be redeemed was an inherent part of every seafaring society in Early Modern Europe. The authorities were confronted with endless petitions from individuals who needed money to save husbands, relatives or friends from a mortal threat and, regarded much more dangerously, their souls from the arch-enemy of God. The endless flow of supplications aimed at the "imagined empathy" of an entire society. As we have seen, the typology of the chosen ways to produce security for the suffering captives exactly follows confessional lines.

In recent years, sociology has turned considerable attention towards the connections between features of the modern welfare states and their respective dominant confession. As an offspring of the widespread discussion and re-

search about and on the welfare state, which was sparked by the first publica-
tion of Esping-Andersen's work on the typologies of the modern welfare states
in 1990[83], the origins of the essential variations between the states of the mod-
ern West are now being traced more and more towards religious roots.[84] Also,
the historians and sociologists with an interest in the Early Modern Epoch have
raised their voices in this debate. In his book "The disciplinary revolution", the
American sociologist Philip Gorski has put religion at the centre of the stage of
Early Modern history and used it as an explanation of many different phenom-
ena of the epoch.[85] Though he is mostly interested in the connections between
the state's power and its respective confession, he has also devoted quite con-
siderable thought to the links between the Reformation and Early Modern
forms of poor-relief.[86] Gorski in essence argues that Protestant poor-relief was
marked by a high degree of centralization and bureaucratization at the level of
the state. A sharp line was drawn in the Protestant world between "deserving"
and "undeserving" poor; the former received alms, the latter were sent to the
"Zuchthaus". Gorski contrasts this with Catholic poor-relief, which remained to
a large degree in the hands of the clergy and never knew a sharp distinction
between "deserving" and "undeserving". He also distinguishes sharply within
Protestantism between Calvinist and Lutheran poor-relief: according to him the
former was marked by "considerable decentralization, and a harsher but more
activist approach towards the poor."[87]

Another sociologist, Sigrun Kahl, has elaborated on Gorski's theses and
made far-reaching connections between the religious doctrines of the respective
three confessions and the social welfare systems of our present-day states.[88]
Kahl finally arrives at a table of twelve stylized features of the three confes-
sions. In this table we find core theological statements on work and poverty and
the way the poor were treated in the area of the respective confession. The
strength of Kahl's article lies in the very serious attempt to bridge the research
of modern sociology on the welfare state and historical research on the Refor-
mation, both of which have more or less ignored each other in the last decades.
Even though Kahl never uses the terms explicitly, she clearly tries to describe

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[83] Esping-Andersen 1990.
[84] Philip Manow has pointed out the many flaws of Esping-Andersen's model of the three
types of modern welfare state: "there is ample evidence that the religious cleavage dimen-
sion was also critical to the way that the capitalist conflict was pacified by means of the
welfare state. Especially if we account for the crucial differences between Lutheran and
reformed Protestantism, we can solve many of the empirical and theoretical problems in
Esping-Andersen's approach", in: Manow 2004.
[85] Gorski 2003.
[86] Gorski 2003, 125-137.
[87] Gorski 2003, 137.
[88] Kahl 2005.

distinct group attitudes of inclusion and exclusion towards its poorer members, the groups being distinguished by their confessions.

Kahl tries very hard in her article to accentuate the differences between the Lutheran and Calvinist approach towards the poor. She empirically bases these differences mainly on the denseness of "Zuchthäuser" in the Calvinist and Lutheran areas and the degree of centralization of systems of poor-relief. From her article one gets the impression that the distinction between "deserving" and "undeserving" poor was marked in Calvinist areas more by punishment of the "undeserving" and in Lutheran areas more by a relatively effective help for the "deserving". The "deserving" got no great assistance in the Calvinist world, while in the Lutheran world the state actively intervened on their behalf. Kahl emphasizes that this state intervention in the Lutheran world happened not in opposition to the church but with intimate collaboration between church and state.[89]

Since we have established that the Sklavenkassen were not an exotic but a normal institution of poor-relief in Early Modern Northern Europe, we can now look at them from the "confessional" angle. We can certainly count the sailors among the "deserving" poor, since they had usually fought bravely to protect the merchandise of their masters, the flag of their state and thus the honor of their rulers.[90] Here was a group that clearly did not deserve the drastic plight into which they had fallen. Thus, the decision-making process towards finding an answer to the slaves' petitions must therefore have been a very hard exercise for the petitioned, since they knew that they were deciding upon the fate of brave members of the community. Their answer to it, whether positive or negative, was thus certainly a reflection of deep convictions with regard to the "imagined empathy" of a given society.

It is remarkable how well the models of Gorski and Kahl fit with the Lutheran Sklavenkassen. Centralized and bureaucratically operating governmental offices, relentlessly collecting obligatory duties and using this money in one of the most complicated businesses conceivable: is that not Lutheran poor-relief to its maximum extent? Since the buying back of sailors from slavery was just a form of poor-relief *in extremis*, we see here the Lutheran way of poor-relief at its extreme. This always happened, as is clearest in the case of the Danish Slavekasse, where Sealand's Bishop led the entire agency, in close cooperation with the churches. The obligatory insurance is the qualitatively new element of these institutions, to which only Lutheran states resorted. For its subjects in danger of and actually in slavery, the Lutheran state was expected and ready to

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[89] Kahl 2005, 105.

[90] It is important to note that only the sailors who had defended themselves bravely were bought back; see § 5 of the Hamburg Sklavenkasse, printed in: Baasch 1897, 207.

provide *absolute* human security, firstly with institutions, later with the readiness to sign expensive peace treaties with the Barbary regents.[91]

This strong role of the Lutheran state as a *redistributor of money* and *producer of human security* was demanded by the ruled and the authorities were willing to accede in this demand. An unavoidable and undeserved risk of any deserving member of this state was regarded as not tolerable. When such a danger lured, the entire system reacted and secured the neutralization of this threat by spreading the financial burden on the shoulders of all risk-bearers. This differs markedly from the Calvinist world, where the state as a nexus binding the people together was not as strong as in the Lutheran world.

What can we deduce from our presentation about the Calvinist welfare state? Kahl has emphasized Calvin's rejection of state involvement in matters of poor-relief:

> According to Calvin, poor relief should be part of the church's ministry. Church and private charities retained a key role in the administration of poor relief. Private charity was part of proving and displaying election. In this sense, Calvinism kept the traditional ostentation of public giving.[92]

Having no Sklavenkasse but only its repeated discussion and ultimate non-introduction at hand, it is not hard to see a rejection of state involvement in the Calvinist-dominated Netherlands. Even the hard plight of its sailors in Northern Africa could not move the society at home to overcome its basic propositions on relief-giving. The result was dire for thousands of Netherlanders who got caught by the Muslim corsairs.

We have to remark that the people of the United Provinces did care a lot for their brethren in Northern Africa. The Netherlanders gave intensely and over decades huge sums of alms for the ransoming of their relatives. At the moment, we have no data at hand but we can presume that the alms-giving in the Netherlands for the caught sailors brought in much more money in relation to national wealth than in the Lutheran world. Individual generosity tried hard to compensate for the lack of a Sklavenkasse. Yet, the ratio of just 33-50% liberated sailors in the richest parts of Europe proves that in the 17th century, the state as machinery of organization and redistribution had already far surpassed the ability of individual generosity and voluntary commitment. The only way to really produce sustainable and absolute human security lay in the intervention of the state, as the examples of the Lutheran neighbors showed.

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[91] These treaties have usually been regarded solely as parts of a commercially activist policy, see e.g.: Andersen 2000, 37-54. This cannot be doubted, but it should be remarked that in Denmark's case the Slavekasse had initiated these peace talks, an institution whose function was not commercial but to produce security for its sailors. The aspect of generating security from slavery is thus not just a side-effect of these treaties, but inextricably connected with their commercial aims.

[92] Kahl 2005, 110.

The Netherlanders had often been asked if they wanted a *Sklavenkasse* to produce human security for all their sailors. This question could only come before the highest assembly of the state because the slaves in Northern Africa were the poor with the greatest merit. The fact that these proposals had caused the Netherlanders intense debates and thorough questioning of their traditional approach proves that the ultimate refusal of a *Sklavenkasse* was well-considered and has to be a reflection of the "imagined empathy" of the Netherlandish society at the time. In the end, the state's intervention was even regarded as harmful for the private ransomers.[93] We know that this was not true and that individuals, for all their endeavors, could not compensate for the state in this regard.

So with the case studies of the Protestant way of ransoming captives out of Northern Africa, we finally arrive at an observation which in itself fits very well into the established picture of sociological and historical literature. The strong role of the Lutheran state as an embodiment of *mutual insurance of a given group* and thereby as an *active producer of human security* can be traced to sources in the existing confessional mentality. The Calvinist state did not act the same way that the Lutheran did; it openly decided not to produce human security when this came into conflict with trade security. The Calvinist state left this most essential sort of poor-relief to the society at large and thus preferred the *production of security for the economy of its system*, not for individuals. The Lutheran state appears as a social system marked by a high degree of inclusiveness for all deserving members of the community, while the Calvinist state appears as a social system marked by more exclusive tendencies, even for its deserving members.

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[93] See footnote 68.

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