The Performance of a Naval Hero
Admirals in the Nordic Seven Years’ War 1563–1570

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In a biography written by a naval commander in 1899, Jakob Thordsson Bagge, the Swedish High Admiral in 1563–1564, is described as the first well-known Swedish naval hero since the Viking age (Munthe 1899, 32). This nationalistic description, typical for its time, was repeated nine years later in a popular book called “Swedish feats and great achievements” (Svenska bragder och stordåd, 1908). Bagge’s successor as high admiral, Klas Kristersson Horn, was also portrayed in these books and described as a naval hero. The late 19th century has been called “the age of hero worship” (Segal 2000, 3). This focus could explain the biographies, but these admirals were described as heroes long before the 19th century.

The Nordic Seven Years’ War in the 1560s was complicated, because Sweden fought against Denmark-Norway, Poland-Lithuania and Lübeck (Sjöblom 2016, 317). Sweden’s foremost enemy at sea was Denmark, allied with Lübeck. In the first volume of Danish-Norwegian hero stories (Larsen Liljefalk, 1893) no fewer than three of the Danish high admirals in the Nordic Seven-Years’-war were presented as naval heroes: Peder Skram, Herluf Trolle and Otte Rud (Larsen Liljefalk 1893). The most famous of them was Herluf Trolle, still remembered as a famous Danish admiral. This war produced remarkably many naval heroes, celebrated in their lifetime and remembered in Scandinavia hundreds of years later (Briand de Crévecœur 1959, Humanitas Cristiana 1990, Olden-Jørgensen 2016).

In this essay I will argue that Scandinavian admirals of the 1560s were performing themselves as naval heroes and that the kings’ ambitions to become European renaissance princes made that possible. Centuries before military uniforms were introduced in the European navies, the admirals could create a long-lasting image of themselves, reminiscent of the manner of Louis XIV, as Peter Burke had shown (Burke 1996). In speeches, portraits, ritualized entrances and other media of the time, they made themselves recognizable as admirals and naval heroes.

The easiest way to find out a person’s rank in the military is to look at the uniform. Historically ‘officers’ uniforms differed from the plain soldiers’ uniforms. Stripes, stars and other signs showed the specific rank of the officer. In
a distinctive hierarchal society as early modern Sweden, order was connected to hierarchy. The legitimacy of the hierarchal order depended on the visibility of the hierarchy, what we call “the discourse of recognition”. (Runefelt 2015, 32) To be recognized as a king you had to perform as a king, likewise, a peasant should look and behave like a peasant, and not dress up (Stadin 2010, 50–54). But what about the admirals? What types of actions or performances were necessary for them to attain the recognition of their contemporaries and to be remembered as naval heroes decades after their death?

In the Swedish army, military uniforms, as in most western European armies, were introduced during the Thirty Years’ War. In 1687, the whole Swedish army should have similar dark blue uniforms (Mollo 1972, 23). The fundamentals of hierarchical uniformity were established in Denmark between 1675 and 1685 (Lind 2010, 51). Military uniforms represented the country but also order in society and within the military organization. Moreover, they created uniformity, discipline and affinity amongst those men who wore the same uniform. Finally, in the battlefield, the uniforms made it easier to distinguish between an enemy and an ally. The Danish soldier in a red coat could not be mistaken for a Swede, dressed in blue. In that respect the uniforms contributed to the formation of a national identity.

At sea, not only did the soldiers represent their country, but foremost the ships with their decorations and flags. Uniforms were introduced much later to navies than armies. The British navy uniforms were introduced in 1748, the Swedish in 1778 (Miller 2007, 7; Melinder 2003, 27). Even though the admirals did not wear uniforms, they made themselves recognizable on deck, as well as when they came home to celebrate a victory and in media of the time.

Theoretical perspectives

One theoretical starting point for my study is that our appearance and our overall performance play an important part in communication. Mostly we are not aware of that, nor do we even desire it, but still, our appearance always communicates something about ourselves. Dress is an important part of this non-verbal communication. It is not an innocent or neutral way of communication, quite the opposite. It is important when power positions and relations are established and reproduced, usually involving both ideology and power (Barnard 2002, 5, 46).

The theoretical perspective is inspired by Erving Goffman’s concept performance. Goffman defines the concept performance as everything a person
does, consciously and unconsciously, to influence another person’s impression of him or her and the impression of the situation (Goffman 2009, 22–23). In this essay I will use the concept performance to find out if they are meaningful in the study of the admirals in the Nordic Seven Years’ War and what made them recognized as naval heroes.

The myth of a naval hero

In May 1563, Jakob Bagge won a battle at Bornholm over the Danes under admiral Brockenhuus. Back in Stockholm one month later, the victory was celebrated and Bagge was honoured as a hero. Even though he was defeated in a later battle, the memory of him is that of a naval hero, or rather what I would call a heroic myth. When Robert Segal, in his book Hero Myths, presents different kinds of hero myths, the warrior hero comes first, represented by the Norse hero Sigurd, the dragon slayer, known in all of Scandinavia. Hero myths transform humans into virtual gods by conferring on them. The heroic qualities must, according to Segal, be magnified to the point of divinity, and some types of heroes fit certain periods. (Segal 2000, 7–9) In Scandinavia the naval hero seems to fit the early modern period.

In early modern Sweden, a man described as a hero already in his lifetime and at his funeral was, with few exceptions, a victorious warrior (Stadin 2001). One person described in his lifetime as a hero was the Swedish king Gustavus II Adolphus, also called the “Lion from the North”, in connection with the myth of the Lion (Åkerman 1996, 23–25). After his death on the battle-field in the Thirty Years’ War he became, for generations of Swedes, the symbol of a hero. Representations of him give the image of a brave warrior giving his life for the sake of the common good, his native country and the protestant cause. He was described as the most heroic example of them all, a hero-king (Stadin 2001, 95).

The admirals Jakob Tordsson Bagge and Klas Kristersson Horn, were celebrated as naval heroes in their lifetime for their victories in the Nordic Seven Years’ War in the 1560s. In Denmark admiral Herulf Trolle was honoured as a hero. All these admirals had won sea battles, which was the first criteria for a naval hero.

The second criteria to be recognized as a warrior hero was high rank. Only high-ranking officers could be described and remembered as heroes, plain soldiers could not. Normally, only men in the nobility had the highest military positions (Sjöblom 2016, 367–368, 408–413). Bagge, Trolle and Horn all belonged to the Scandinavian high nobility. Bagge was originally a
Norwegian (then under Danish rule) noble family, but his father moved to Sweden in the 1520s and in 1556 Jakob Bagge was also ennobled in Sweden (Westling). Trolle was a family belonging to both the Swedish and the Danish nobility and their estates were found on both sides of the border. That also meant that the Danish admiral Herluf Trolle and his first cousin Arvid Trolle, who was vice admiral in the Swedish navy, were fighting against each other in the sea battles in this war (Olden-Jørgensen 2016, 20–25). Horn was a noble family in Sweden, and they had most of their estates in the eastern half of the Swedish realm, in what is now Finland (Broomé).

Thirdly, to be celebrated as a hero, the warrior had to be considered virtuous. The reputation, true or not, was very important. As Segal states, heroism permits and even requires make-believe. This reputation was established in one of the more widespread media of the time, namely in congratulatory poems and in funeral orations, held orally during funerals or memorizing ceremonies. Those who could afford this had these speeches printed and they were read as edifying literature (Stadin 1997, 225–226).

A definition of virtue given by Aristotle is: “A virtue is a deliberated and permanent disposition, based on a standard applied to ourselves and defined by the reason displayed by the man of good sense” (Aristoteles 1967, 22–22, 57, 59. In its greatest generality, the virtuous disposition presents itself as the aspiration to goodness (Beacher 1992, 41). For an admiral in early modern Scandinavia, this aspiration to goodness should be used serving the native country and the king.

Ever since classical antiquity, some virtues were understood as universal dispositions, important for every person, or at least every man, while others were more or less specific for each social rank, estate, gender and profession. The four universal virtues are Prudence, also described as wisdom, Justice or fairness, Temperance, also known as restraint, the practice of self-control, discretion and moderation and finally Courage, also called fortitude. In the Middle Ages these Cardinal virtues, as they were called, were completed with the three Christian virtues; faith, hope and love. “Pietas” was the comprehensive term for these Christian virtues. (Stadin 2007, 229). The naval heroes of the Nordic Seven Years’ War were described as men with all these seven virtues, making them almost divine. I will argue that the myths about them as naval heroes were connected to their performances.
Portraits of naval heroes

In a funeral oration for Jacob Bagge, he is described as pious man. The oration first praised him for his faithfulness and fidelity to Sweden and to no less than three kings. He was praised for his justice, he separated good from evil. He was also described as “highly wise” and “prudent” (Ludvigsson 1577). Prudence gave the ability to oversee all the circumstances and factors in a given case and to give “good advice”, settling the prosperity of a country in peace and in war (Schefferus 1671, 33). Finally, and foremost, a prudent man had foresight and stayed calm in the battle, he was not a dare-devil (Ludvigsson 1577).

As a warrior he was described as loyal and what was described as “manlig” (Ludvigsson 1577). Today, the English words manliness, masculinity and manhood, are all used to express this word. This is, however, old Swedish, a language very different from modern Swedish, and many words had a different meaning. In the 16th and 17th centuries manlig meant courage in the battlefield, that and nothing else (Stadin 2001, 115). Bagge’s courage was further emphasized saying he was fearless (Ludvigsson 1577). There is no doubt, Bagge had all the virtues worthy a hero. The main question is, how did he perform to be recognized as a naval hero by the contemporaries and posterities?

After the victory over the Danish fleet under Jakob Brockenhuus at Bornholm in May 1563, Bagge went back to Stockholm where the ships arrived one month later. The entrance into the Swedish capital was arranged as a celebration of the glorious victory, but moreover as Bagge’s personal triumph. Bagge lead a procession from the ship and up to the royal castle (Munthe 1899, 30). The entrance also gave admiral Bagge the opportunity to perform his image in front of the king and the people in Stockholm and to influence how he was perceived and remembered.

The annals describing Bagge during his triumphant walk are short: “he had a golden chain around his neck” (Stockholm… 1842, 128). The description in the biography from around 1900, not only mentions his golden necklace, but also his splendid dress. That is what made him recognized as a naval hero. (Munthe 1899, 32) We do not know if the author added the dress because he had seen a portrait of Bagge. It is hard to know whether the visual media such as portraits and rituals illustrated the words and the texts or if it was the other way around. However, we do know that these medias influenced and strengthened each other and were used in the king’s and the aristocracy’s performance (Burke 1996, 31).
To analyse the admirals’ performance in the portraits, I use Roland Barthes’ semiotic analysis of social values connected to materiality. He describes how the cultural sign contributes to constructing and maintaining social status for certain groups in society (Barthes 2007). Clothes are both historical and sociological objects and they could in any historical moment be seen on two levels: the first level is what you see, for example, hat. That level is denotation, the black hat, the signifier. The second level, the connotation, is our interpretation of what we see, connected to the general beliefs, conceptual frameworks and value systems in society, for example “elegance”, the signified (Barthes 1977, 33–35). As these cultural values constantly change the meaning of clothes, hairstyles or any other sign in our appearance are constantly negotiated and changed.

This analytical system could be used to study a myth. In myths there is the same theme, signifiers, the signified and signs. According to Barthes, the myth consists of a semiotic chain where the sign is linked to a second set of signifiers on a broader ideological meaning (Barthes 2007, 206–223). Elegance becomes a signifier signifying for example aristocracy. This might help us to find out how the myths of the naval heroes in the Nordic Seven Years’ War were formed.

A painted portrait is always a result of a negotiation between conventions, the artist and the portrayed. Within the conventions, the artist and the person portrayed negotiated several aspects, if the portrait should be en face or in profile, in half- or whole figure, the background and symbolic details. During the Renaissance and the Baroque rhetorical means were often used and the person portrayed communicated the viewer through gestures and expressions (Cavalli-Björkman 2001, 9). An admiral could by the choice of dress, symbols and gestures influence the view of himself, his masculinity and how his deed should be perceived by contemporary viewers and even more by posterity. The nobility had portraits painted as signs of the continuity of their dynasties, but also as signs justifying their position (Visage du grand siècle 1997, 75).
Above is a half-length portrait of Bagge with a plain black background. There are no obvious signs making direct connotations to the navy or his military rank in his personal appearance or in the background. However, no one in the 16th century would have expected that. Being an admiral was not an office in our modern meaning. Like other military and civil offices, it was considered as a mission and the admirals were appointed for each mission. It was the nobility’s duty to help the king to rule the country as an officer or a civil servant, and the high-ranked missions were of course the most honourable.
These missions were usually given as rewards to diligent and zealous noblemen from the right families, faithful to the king (Stadin 2001, 116–117). Missions in the army, civil offices and missions in the navy were often mixed in a way seemingly random for us today. Professionalism was not yet invented in the 1560s, neither in the Scandinavian military nor in the civil service (Asker 1983, 100–102; Arteus 1986, 69, 119–120).

The portrait shows a middle-aged man, whose beard is greyish. His gaze is fixed far away. A little selvage of the white shirt’s collar is shown, but the rest of his dress is black. Black was the most fashionable colour in the 16th century. It was not possible to dye cloth totally black until the 1360s which is when it became exclusive. By and by it became a popular colour among wealthy men. The Italian official and diplomat Baldassare Castiglione recommended in his famous book *The courtier* from 1528 all men “with ambitions” to dress in black (Castiglione 2003, 160–161). When the Spanish court in the mid-16th century imposed its codes and customs upon the whole of Europe, black was a part of that. Furthermore, when the Spanish kings Charles V and Philip II of Habsburg demonstrated their personal taste for this colour, it became popular among mighty men all over Europe (Harvey 1995, 72–73; Pastoureau 2008, 103). That was true in the Scandinavian countries too. Because a vestimentary system is either regional or international, but not national (Barthes 2006, 5), the black dress showed that he was a diligent man, loyal to the king, prepared to give his life for the native country.

The fur collar gives the connotations of prosperity and dignity. His black hat, probably in velvet is not only elegant, it shows his authority. This discourse of recognition seems highly relevant looking at the portrait of Jakob Bagge.

The hat is a beret, a kind of soft hat very popular among the upper classes all over Europe in the 16th century. The beret has been described as an imitation of the magnificence of the royal crown, but still it could take different shapes. The decoration, hatbands, jewels, pearls and embroidery, were important, displaying status (Amphlett 2003, 89–93; McDowell 1992, 9–10). Bagge’s hat is decorated with a golden ribbon and a white feather, also giving connotations to rank, dignity and prosperity. It showed he belonged to nobility and allowed him to receive what in early modern Europe was known as “hat honour”. As the king expected his courtiers and all his subjects to respect his crown by uncovering their heads in his presence, officers and other nobility expected the same respect be shown to their hat by their inferiors. Hats proclaimed the man and was bound by etiquette (McDowell 1992 9–10, 34, 97).
The admiral’s hat was very important in the navy and in sea battles. If an admiral surrendered, he signalled that by lowering the top sail and the admiral’s flag on his ship. Moreover, he lifted his hat up high and gave the order to the officers to do the same. This was sign for surrender and that he wanted to give himself up as a prisoner of war. That is, for example, what the Danish high admiral Jakob Borkhuusen did in May 1564 when defeated by Jakob Bagge in a battle at Bornholm. The Danish admiral, officers and some 600 soldiers were moved to Swedish ships and taken as prisoners of war. According to the instruction for the Swedish high admiral Klas Kristersson Horn from 1565, those enemies who gave up voluntarily would not be killed but taken as prisoners of war (Instruktion och befällning… 1565). In that way, lifting the hat could save the admiral’s and the officers’ lives.

The most striking thing in Jakob Bagge’s appearance, however, are the heavy golden chains hanging around his neck, also mentioned in the annals. There is also a charm hanging from one of the chains. When Bagge posed for the artist, his splendid dress and necklace were important. They signified how Bagge wanted to be perceived and remembered.

It is evident from the portraits that golden necklaces were high fashion among aristocratic men in Sweden and Denmark in the 1560s. Portraits of the time show men wearing necklaces over their black high-necked waistcoats. Good examples of this are the three brothers of the Sture family, which was at that time the topmost noble family in Sweden. Two of the brothers, Erik and Nils, together with their father, were put to death by order of the king in 1567. The portraits of the older two sons were painted some time before that, and that of the third son a couple of years later. In these portraits all wear thin golden necklaces, worn over their black waistcoats in the stiff, high-necked “Spanish fashion”.

Bagge’s chain was, however, more than a necklace. The chain was a gift from the king with a charm that appears to be a medal, but was it? Royal medals had been issued in the antiquity but subsequently the practice was forgotten. In the 15th century, medals were re-invented in the Italian states and spread to the rest of Europe. They should be related to the Renaissance princes and their political aspirations and fulfil their desire for fame and immortality. According to Stephen Scher, the medals were thereby signifying alliances and friendship (Scher 1994, 13). In Sweden, Erik XIV (1560–1568) was the first Swedish king to issue a medal. This was in connection with the funeral for his father, Gustav Vasa in 1560. The charm on Bagge’s chain is not that medal, or any other known royal medal from this time (Hildebrand, 1975, 21–22).
Following the defeat of the Danish fleet in 1563, the already retired Peder Skram was recalled as the Danish high admiral for a short period of time (Larsen-Liljefalk 1893, 12–13). The portrait from 1571 shows the sixty-nine-year-old former Danish admiral, Peder Skram, called “the daredevil”. He wears a necklace with three thin chains and a small charm, probably a medal.

In May 1564, the Swedish fleet led by Jakob Bagge once again met the Danish fleet in battle, this time off the northern cap of Öland. By then, Skram was dismissed and Herluf Trolle was appointed high admiral over the Danish fleet. This time the allied fleets from Denmark and Lübeck were victorious. Mars, the Swedish admiral’s ship, was stuck in fire, exploded and sank. Admiral Bagge, his vice-admiral and some officers had given themselves up as prisoners of war before moving to the Lübeck admiral’s ship (Sjöblom 2016, 332).

One year later, their luck changed once again. Trolle was wounded in a battle and died after some time. In one of the descriptions of this battle, it is mentioned that the Swedes could easily recognize the Danish admiral standing on the deck. He was dressed in armour and a big hat with feathers, showing himself to be the most important person on the ship (Munthe 1902, 60–61). An elegant hat was a sign of authority and made it possible to recognize the admiral, both among his own men, but also by the enemy. The hat proclaimed a man’s authority and honour; therefore, it could also be his undoing.

In the funeral oration for Trolle held by the vice chancellor at the University of Copenhagen, Niels Hemmingsøn, and a in a memorial speech held by professor Christian Machabæus one year later, Trolle’s virtues were praised. In both speeches the Danish high admiral was described as a true hero. Hemmingsøn praised his justice and his loyalty to the king and his native country, and of course his piety (Hemmingsøn 1565). Machabæus argued that Trolle’s virtues honoured him in his lifetime and brought him admiration after his death. His justice, courage and valour were mentioned in particular, but also his prudence. Machabæus underlined that Trolle had never acted hastily, allowing reason and prudence rule (Machabæus 1566). Similar to Bagge, Trolle was praised for all the Christian and natural virtues required by a hero.

In describing Trolle’s personality, Hemmingsøn referred to some words Trolle had said himself, which would later often said about him: “as I am wearing golden chains, have large estates and am more esteemed than others…” it was his duty to risk his life for his king and country (Hemmingsøn 1565). In a poem written in honour of Trolle, his heroic deeds
were closely connected to his honour and wealth, but most of all to his golden chains. (*Epitafium I*) It was described as a prerequisite for his heroic deeds, not as a reward for them.

The quoted words about the golden chains are underpinned by the images of Herluf Trolle, for example, an etching showing him in his final year wearing armour and performing as a military officer (Figure 6). Around his neck and over the armour, he is wearing a golden chain with a charm in the form of an elephant, the symbol of the Danish Elephant order. He was conferred upon this order in 1559, when the Danish king Fredrik II was coronated. Later the same year, Trolle was appointed admiral. That means that the badge was given to him before any sea battle. The king had given him the golden chain, the order, then appointed him an admiral. The chain signified allegiance and Trolle carried out his duty.

But Trolle had been wearing golden chains long before he was appointed admiral. In a painted portrait from 1551, he has a forked beard, the latest fashion, is wearing a black dress and over that a coat with a fur collar and a beret hat with a jewel. In his left hand he is holding a pair of gloves. Under the coat he is wearing a necklace of gold. The connotations are prosperity, aristocracy and a gentleman *à la mode*.

In an engraving from the same period, Trolle is wearing the chain over armour, as in the late etching, but here it is not the elephant order badge, it seems to be the same necklace as in the painted portrait. If a man wears a golden necklace over armour, it is not because it is useful when fighting. I suggest that it is because it is an important aspect of his performance as a warrior and a hero. Later on, when he was presented with the elephant-order badge, this was recognized by the king.

When the Swedish admiral ship *Mars* had been destroyed in the summer of 1564, Jakob Bagge became a prisoner of war in Denmark. The Swedish fleet needed a new high admiral and for a short period and Klas Eriksson Fleming was appointed. he was soon dismissed by the king, however, for neglect (Sjöblom 2016, 334). Klas Kristerson Horn was then appointed as the new high admiral over the Swedish fleet. He was involved in several sea battles against the allied fleet until his death due to the pestilence in September 1566. In 1787, a medal was made in memory of Horn and his heroic deeds. On the medal, he is described as the one who deliberated the Baltic Sea from enemies. In Swedish nationalistic writings from around 1900, Horn was dubbed a “patriotic hero”.

Horn’s biographies mention that he was conferred upon the Swedish Salvator order. This was a Swedish knightly order founded by Erik XIV.
According to an old notation, some men belonging to the high nobility working for the king were conferred upon this order when Erik XIV was coronated. If this is true, it is possible that Klas Horn was one of them, but there is no evidence at all that anyone else, other than the king himself, was conferred upon this order (Braunstein 2007, 6). In the painted portrait of Horn, he is adorned with two golden chains, one with a charm. This is not, however, the Salvator order or any other Swedish order or known royal medal (Dahlberg 1694, 1–9; *Antikvarisk tidskrift för Sverige*, 75; Hildebrand 1875, 21–22). Perhaps the charm is a gift from the king, but it could just as well be something he added to the chains himself. If he wanted it to look like a medal, he succeeded.

The portrait of Klas Horn shows a man in half profile with reddish hair and a short beard. He looks back at the observer, observably. He is wearing a black silk dress and over that a black coat. The coat has a fur collar and several broad golden ribbons. On his head he wears a velvet beret, also with golden decorations. In his left hand he is holding a pair of gloves and on one of his fingers he is wearing a ring with a large jewel. In his right hand he is holding a white silk scarf. Around his neck, Horn is wearing two golden chains, one with a large charm. The background is dark, and to the left there is a dark green drapery with a golden fringe. The denotations resemble the portraits of Bagge and Trolle, yet they are a little more splendid. His dress is *à la mode* and would have been considered suitable for ambitious men in the high nobility, working for the king and the state. The connotations are prosperity, high position, status and aristocracy.
Figure 6: Herluf Trolle in his final year

Figure 7: The Danish Elephant order

Figure 8: Herluf Trolle

Figure 9: Klas Horn (detail)
Let’s look at the gloves! Like Herluf Trolle he did not wear them on, he is holding them in his left hand. Holding gloves was symbolic. In the Middle Ages, those who were dubbed a knight, installed a bishop or another high position besides receiving the insignia, they also got a pair of gloves as a sign of their privilege. Holding gloves was to demonstrate position and status. The gloves were, together with the sword, a sign of nobility. There were also a lot of rituals connected to the gloves, used in early modern Europe. For example, to throw the glove in front somebody was to challenge them to a duel, and to put a stake on one’s own honour.

The admirals showed their gloves in their portraits, but not their swords. Considering the importance of the sword as a sign of nobility and dignity, this is remarkable. There are, however, representations of them where swords are shown, namely their gravestones. On the gravestone of Klas Horn and his wife, he is wearing armour and a customary sidearm. In Herluf Trolle’s grave monument, a sword is lying beside him. This gravestone resembles the one made for the Swedish vice-admiral Nils Karlsson Gyllenstierna, who died in 1564. In both cases the swords are very long, probably two-handed swords. These swords were too long and too heavy to be used in a fight. They were ceremonial swords, carried over the shoulder, and used as a sign of dignity. In the army they were carried by special carriers, who also acted as guards for the officer. In the navy they were connected to the commander. Herbert Seitz finds that in Sweden, the flowering season for this ceremonial sword, was the second half of the 16th century (Seitz 1955). These ceremonial swords were shown on gravestones from the 1560s, but they do not appear in the admirals’ self-fashioning performances in paintings and other media in their life-time.

The triumph and the golden chain

Erik XIV was king of Sweden up to the autumn of 1568. He was a true Renaissance prince, acting like the monarchs in France, England and other European states. One aspect of his princely rule was to arrange triumphal processions celebrating military victories. The processions were ritualized to make them appear special and they were arranged like a theatre. In ritualizing an action, different kinds of techniques were used, for example formalizing, dramatizing, repetition, and connection to traditions (Bell 1992, 74, 197). Like coronations, royal weddings and other ceremonies, the processions were multimedia events, where words, acting, music and pictures created a total effect. Afterwards, the processions were memorized through
engravings, coins, and not least portraits of those involved. The ritualized ceremonies not only manifested power, in early modern Europe the pomp was a goal in itself (Burke 1996, 26–27, 32–33).

In at least two of the ritualized triumphs arranged by Erik XIV, the king himself lead magnificent processions riding on a horse. Another procession was the previously mentioned procession celebrating Bagge’s first victory. After a Swedish victory of a naval battle in 1565, Klas Horn came back to Stockholm in July. The celebrations were carefully prepared to give glory to Sweden and to Horn. For his entry, a triumphal arch was built across the procession street. The king was not in Stockholm at the time, but he wrote instructions to the governor in Stockholm telling him how to arrange the procession (brev från Erik XIV till ståthållaren i Stockholm 30 juli 1565).

An important part of the triumphs was to show up trophies. The defeated admirals’ flags and other flags conquered from the enemy were carried in the processions as proof of victory. The very triumphant trophies were, however, the defeated admiral and the other prisoners of war. Representing their navy and their country the defeated admirals were treated as living trophies by the victors. In the triumph procession for Bagge, the Swedish officers came just behind him. Then the flags were carried and after that came the prisoners of war, the Danish admiral, Jacob Brockenhuus, and some of his officers. All the Danes had their hair shaved off and, in their hands, they held striped canes. A court jester was playing the violin and was dancing around them. The officers were followed by some ordinary Danish soldiers, all of them chained together (Munthe 1899, 2).

The triumph procession celebrating Klas Horn one year later was arranged in a similar way to Bagge’s triumph. The most important trophy was Danish high admiral Otte Knudsen Rud and some officers. There was a farmer playing bagpipes leading the prisoners. (Larsen Liljefalk 1893, 102–103.) This was alluding in a Danish song saying that “now the Swedes have to dance after our tune (originally pipe)”, implying that it was the other way around. In the description of the procession, it is emphasized that the admiral and the officers, as well as the soldiers, had all got their hair shaved off (Munthe 1902, 83–84).

Shaving someone’s hair off was, at least since Delila had cut Samson’s hair, a symbolic act of humiliation. As for Samson the shaved hair deprived a man, his masculine strength, his dignity and symbolically his ability to win a victory. A bald man was, by definition, a weak man (Book of Judges16:17–22). There are a lot of European stories and tales about the connection between a man’s hair and his dignity and/or physical strength. For the kings
of Franks, long hair was a sign of wealth, rank and dignity. Other men were required to have their hair shorter than the king, as a sign of subservience. Among medieval Germans, short hair, especially shaved hair, was a sign of ignominy (Corson, 1980 91–95). This symbolic meaning of the shaved hair seems to have been topical in the 1560s. The importance of shaving the hair of the prisoners of war was further demonstrated in an instruction to those who were responsible for imprisoning the Danish officers and soldiers. They had orders to shave the prisoners’ heads at least once a week (Munthe 2002, 81).

In the procession to the royal castle, the act of ignominy of the defeated admirals was highlighted by the jester, respectively the farmer mocking them and making fools of them. It appears the humiliation of the prisoners of war was meant to make the show more entertaining and the victorious Swedish admirals’ triumph even greater.

The most interesting information in the king’s instruction to the governor in Stockholm was that the captains who had boarded the enemy ships should be honoured with golden chains. The governor was instructed to give them all the golden chains he could find. Other brave captains and officers were to be decorated with silver necklaces and bracelets (Brev från Erik XIV…; Sjöblom 2016, 346). The important thing was that they were chains of gold, not how they looked or that they were of a specific kind. Badges of merit were not introduced in Sweden until the early 17th century. This clearly shows that in the second half of the 16th century not only medals, but also necklaces and bracelets were used as symbols of honour, signifying naval heroes.

The performance of naval heroes
Both Swedish and Danish admirals, fighting each other in Nordic Seven Years’ War, have been remembered as naval heroes. This only applied, of course, to those who had won at least one great sea battle. In funeral orations and complimentary poems, after their death they were celebrated as true heroes. Around 1900, they continued to be described as naval heroes.

Both the Danish and the Swedish kings honoured these admirals in different ways, but most of all by giving them orders and golden chains. The Danish admiral Trolle was conferred upon the Elephant order. The Swedish king Erik arranged ritualized processions and ceremonies, celebrating the victories, giving, in particular, Bagge and Horn the opportunity to perform as heroes. An important part of that was to decorate the admirals with golden
chains. When there were no military uniforms, no military orders and no badges of merit, these golden necklaces were used as signs of honour.

The kings' homage made the honour visible for their contemporaries. The admirals performed in a way that made their heroic deeds remembered a long time after their death, dressed and in other ways self-fashioned as sophisticated aristocrats in powerful positions and adorned in golden chains. This is remarkable, especially as portraits were unusual outside the royal family in the Scandinavian countries. Their performance, seen in the ritualized celebrations and in the portraits, promoted the myths of naval heroes.
ON WAR ON BOARD

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