The establishment in Europe of a postal service revolutionized seventeenth century communications as well as the media landscape. Throughout most of Europe, news, which rose sharply in volume, now traveled expeditiously. The comparative ease by which word could be sent helped new social and economic relationships flourish, intensifying the process of state-building. The consequences of this transformation for both postal workers and consumers alike permeate the work contained.

The Post's historical role must be considered in the context of European society at large. Focus should move away from its organization and development as an institution in isolation. That is the perspective shared by contributors to this anthology.
CONNECTING THE BALTIC AREA

The Swedish Postal System in the Seventeenth Century

Editor
Heiko Droste

Södertörns högskola
Book Cover Image: Detail from an oil painting of a Postman on Horseback (Postryttare), painted in the 1840s by artist and army officer John Georg Arsenius (1818–1903). The original is housed at Postmuseum, Stockholm.

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<td>Gdańsk</td>
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<td>Daugavgrīva</td>
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<td>Voka</td>
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<td>Goldingen</td>
<td>Kuldīga</td>
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<td>Göteborg</td>
<td>Gothenburg</td>
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<td>Hapsal</td>
<td>Haapsalu</td>
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<td>Helsingør</td>
<td>Elsinore</td>
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<td>Kexholm</td>
<td>Периозерск</td>
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<td>Königsberg</td>
<td>Калининград</td>
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<td>Libau</td>
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<td>Lohusu</td>
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<td>Memel</td>
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<td>Mitau</td>
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<td>Nargön</td>
<td>Naissaar</td>
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<td>Neuhausen</td>
<td>Vastselinna</td>
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<td>Nyen</td>
<td>Санкт-Петербург</td>
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<td>Pernau</td>
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<td>Stettin</td>
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<td>Tackeort</td>
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<td>Tavastehus</td>
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<td>Uleåborg</td>
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<td>Выборг</td>
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<td>Waddemois</td>
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<td>Hamina</td>
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<td>Wenden</td>
<td>Čēsis</td>
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<td>Wesenberg</td>
<td>Rakvere</td>
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<td>Wilna</td>
<td>Vilnius</td>
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<td>Wolmar</td>
<td>Valmiera</td>
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<td>Wulf</td>
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Abbreviations, State Institutions, Coinages, Dates

Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AOSB</td>
<td>Axel Oxenstiernas skrifter och brevväxling (The works and correspondence of Axel Oxenstierna)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAA</td>
<td>Estonian Historical Archives</td>
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<tr>
<td>K. Maj:t</td>
<td>Kunglig Majestät, King in Council</td>
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<td>KB</td>
<td>Kungliga biblioteket (National Library of Sweden)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LVVA</td>
<td>Latvian State Historical Archives</td>
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<tr>
<td>ÖPD</td>
<td>Överpostdirektörens arkiv (Archive of the post’s General Director)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PM</td>
<td>Postmuseum (Swedish Postal Museum)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RA</td>
<td>Riksarkivet (Swedish National Archives)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RR</td>
<td>Rikregistraturet (The government’s registry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRP</td>
<td>Svenska riksrådets protokoll (Protocols of the Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UUB</td>
<td>Uppsala University Library (Carolina Rediviva)</td>
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State Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
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<tr>
<td>Board for Public Lands and Funds</td>
<td>Kammarkollegiet</td>
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<td>Board of Mines</td>
<td>Bergskollegium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Board of Trade</td>
<td>Kammerskollegium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Board of War</td>
<td>Krigskollegiet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chancery Audit Board</td>
<td>Kammarrevisionen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chancery Board</td>
<td>Kanslikollegiet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exchequer Board</td>
<td>Statskontoret</td>
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Coinage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Currency</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>daler kopparmynt</td>
<td>dr (lit. copper dollar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daler silvermynt</td>
<td>dr sm (lit. silver dollar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>krona</td>
<td>Kr (lit. crown, the Swedish krona)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mil</td>
<td>Swedish mile, today ten kilometers, was 10,668 km between 1649–1889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>öre</td>
<td>1/100th of a krona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>riksdaler</td>
<td>rdr (lit. dollar of the realm, from Reichstaler)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>runstyck</td>
<td>rst (lit. round piece)</td>
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<tr>
<td>uns</td>
<td>ounce</td>
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</table>
Dates

All dates in this book are given in the old style. Sweden only converted to the Gregorian calendar in 1753. The Julian calendar lagged ten days behind the Gregorian, meaning that 1 May (O.S.) became 11 May (N.S.), and so on. Between 1700 and 1712, Sweden even had a unique calendar that lagged nine days behind the Gregorian calendar, the result of a decision to convert gradually to the Gregorian calendar but that had only just begun to be implemented before the return to the old style in 1712.
Acknowledgements

This book is the result of a long and fruitful collaboration between the members of a research project based at Södertörn University. Financed by the Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies (Östersjöstiftelsen), Kekke Stadin, Örjan Simonson, Magnus Linnarsson (né Olsson), and Heiko Droste worked on the project ‘The Seventeenth Century Media Revolution: Postal Service, News Service and the Postmasters’. The project started in 2006 and will be concluded in early 2011, when this book will be published, almost at the same time as Magnus Linnarsson’s thesis, Postgång på växlande villkor: Det svenska postväsendets organisation under stormaktstiden.

As well as the wide-ranging and rewarding discussions within this project, its members organized two workshops, inviting other historians from Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, and Germany. This book therefore contains the results of many debates, and we hope it will pave the way for many more. Postal history still struggles on the outskirts of academic history, despite its central role in the history of communications over the past four hundred years.

The manuscript has been much improved by the astute comments of Per Bolin Hort and David Gaunt, as well as Södertörn University’s publication committee. We received valuable advice as well as the means to publish the book in the University’s own series, Södertörn Studies in History and Södertörn Academic Studies.

Huddinge, 10 July 2010

Heiko Droste
Social relations are founded on a mutual conversation. Since antiquity, the letter has been understood as a form of this conversation; one that took place between absent people (*sermo absentis ad absentem*). To ensure this conversation, every kind of society needs a reliable postal system. This was true of ancient empires; it is still true of modern nation-states. Communication by written messages, sent via special envoy or regular messenger, is a criterion for a society’s interconnectedness on a personal level as well as a government’s ability to rule over its territory. It is pivotal for all kinds of long-distance trade and intellectual debate. Postal systems are thus part of the very fabric of societies. As such, they are a subject of abiding interest for scholars and enthusiasts.

Studies of postal history generally focus on the post as a public institution, either run by the government or administered independently. Post historians describe the organization, the objects, and its symbols as well as the local history of the post. In this research, the post as an institution, not to mention its relevance, seems self-evident from its very beginnings. The post brought a major improvement in the transport of letters that in Europe, for example, up to early modern times had been slow, frequently disrupted, and accessible to very few. However, most post historians describe this development without taking society as a whole into account, a perspective determined by their concern with the institution itself. In consequence, postal history long remained a self-contained historical subject that revolved around postal museums, journals of postal history, and a whole range of collectors’ societies (stamps, envelopes, uniforms, and the like).

This lack of scholarly interest in society at large, whose very fabric changed with the introduction of postal services, marks most studies on the history of media and communications. In the mid twentieth century the so-called Toronto School emphasized the influence of all forms of communication on the structure of societies as well as on the psychology of individuals. These studies focused particularly on the importance of changes in communications due to technological innovations, paradigmatically the invention of the printing press in the mid fifteenth century, and the telegraph, radio, and television in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Marshall McLuhan congenially summarized this new perspective on media in the phrase: “The medium is the message” He too stressed

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the importance of technological innovation that in turn had had a lasting impact on changing perceptions of the world.

Although these works, and McLuhan in particular, attracted much attention, many historians and philologists still disregard the broad picture, choosing to focus on certain aspects or particular sources. The evolution of the early modern news culture in Europe is particularly interesting, not least because it can serve to nuance Innis’s and McLuhan’s findings. In most parts of Europe, the establishment of a postal service gained momentum in the seventeenth century. This development was pivotal for contemporaries, which is why Wolfgang Behringer describes the Imperial post run by the Thurn und Taxis family as the centre of a ‘communications revolution’.3

This revolution was not triggered by new technology, a fact that might also go some way to explaining the marginal interest in postal history. Instead, the communications revolution of the seventeenth century was based on organizational reforms of public postal services. These reforms were implemented in conjunction with the introduction of diligence or stagecoach traffic and the advent of printed newspapers to supplement manuscript newsletters. All of these changes were related to the post, which offered the necessary infrastructure – one that encompassed almost all of Europe. The national postal systems must therefore be understood as a part of one network that was built up around certain nodes (mostly merchant cities). In these nodes, letters and news were distributed, travellers got onto or changed diligence, and newspapers were edited and sold.4

In Northern Europe, the post amplified existing structures, primarily the established relationships between the Hanse cities, augmented by the region’s burgeoning capital cities (Copenhagen, Stockholm). These nodes were connected by a growing number of postal routes, which were trafficked more and more often. Despite problems due to weather, war, and other conflicts, this transport was notably reliable right from the start.

Within just a few decades, the new postal system changed not only public communications but also the media landscape in unprecedented ways. It was not only that it became easier and cheaper to travel in person or to send news, it was the regularity of these new institutions as well as the scope of the postal system that changed contemporaries’ perceptions of their world. It became possible to learn about other parts of Europe and beyond on a regular basis. It was also easier and cheaper to engage in economic as well as social relationships, even over immense distances. In other words, these relationships operated over time and space: they became disembedded.5 This development was vital for the creation of public institutions, and consequently the state-building process. The post offered

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3 Behringer 2003.
4 Cowan 2007.
to central governments new modes of administering state territory. It also provided the basis for a cultural transfer between cultural, scientific, and merchant elites.\textsuperscript{6}

Thus far, the seventeenth century’s communication culture has not received the same attention as Gutenberg’s invention, possibly because it cannot be attributed to an invention or discovery. Whatever the case, the lack of interest has in turn led to an overemphasis on the importance of printed communication in early modern cultures.\textsuperscript{7} A major part of the new media culture remained handwritten in form, confined to private relationships as well as public audiences, and so creating a multitude of news environments.

However, the communications revolution not only offered new possibilities. It also demanded certain skills to handle the growing flood of news, which was already perceived as a problem in the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{8} How should the news be handled, and who was supposed to partake of these new modes of communications? Did newspapers in any way threaten to unveil the governments’ secrets, the \textit{arcana} of a rule that until now had been limited to the elites? The debates were lively. As a result, the need for public censorship increased, not least because manuscript newspapers and a growing number of leaflets and pamphlets accompanied the printed newspapers. In the end, governments not only bowed to the inevitable, but also changed their rules of governance in order to cope with new forms of influence over public opinion.\textsuperscript{9}

Another aspect of this new era of communications was that the art of letter-writing evolved, with the help of a huge quantity of manuals of letter-writing, that described in detail how social relationships worked over long distances, and what role news had in these relationships. When it came to long-distance trade, the changes were equally far-ranging. Despite the fact that even at the end of the seventeenth century communications were largely dependent on ship transport, merchants took immediately to the new possibilities.\textsuperscript{10} They needed reliable and fast communications – and they had the means to pay for postal services. In fact, the post lowered transaction costs, while offering much more frequent and regular information. Letters and bills of exchange could be sent in a reliable way; the post also opened the way for the shipment of small valuable goods.

Not only did the number of letters increase sharply, changing the way in which public institutions and governments worked,\textsuperscript{11} but regular correspondence between news nodes transformed the news itself into a commodity. In the long run, public communications, letters, newspapers, and other news forms formed an economy with huge profits to be made, and it was this profit that answe-
red for the maintenance of the post as a state-privileged institution for which the state usually did not pay. It was instead merchants and their need for communications that financed a service that governments then used for free. Public communications were thus a multi-faceted market, which combined letters, transport, newspapers, and the dispatch of every kind of light goods.

Ultimately it was governments that enjoyed the greatest advantages. They not only used the post for free in return for offering privileges and protection to their postmasters, but the post, finally, turned into an important source of income. Governments could keep the revenues themselves or give them away as fief or favour. The range of institutional settings was wide, and government policies varied over time. Some governments decided to control public communications, including newspapers, quite closely, while others left the postal business in the hands of privileged families such as the Thurn und Taxis. 12 There has so far been very little research that enables comparison in these matters. 13 Postal history is still perceived as part of national or state history, although right from the beginning the post was founded on and profited by transnational relations, and although news nodes were much the same for different postal systems. There is, thus, a distinct need for research on such international relations, and their organization in the era of the emerging nation-states, that examines how these nodes worked and who organized them independently of their given governments. Thus far we can only say that this transfer worked, although we do not yet understand its organization and economic conditions.

In many respects, Swedish postal and communication history resembles this overall picture. In Sweden proper the postal service was founded in 1636 in the name of the Crown. It was part of a European development, connecting Sweden and its realm to the European postal system (via Hamburg). It was also part of an ongoing state-building process, in which the post in due course worked as a regular government agency.

Compared to the Holy Roman Empire, which in many respects served as a template for the Swedish post, the postal business, and especially the newspapers, in Sweden were more centralized and subject to far greater supervision. This had consequences for Sweden’s postal organization as well as its contemporary news culture. This volume presents the results of a four-year research project on ‘The seventeenth-century media revolution: postal service, news service and the postmasters’ at Södertörn University, funded by the Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies (Östersjöstiftelsen), which concluded in 2009. Its aim was to investigate the communications revolution and its impact on Sweden and its provinces from the early seventeenth century to 1718. The project focused on the new communications era and its agents of change, especially

12 Behringer 2003.
13 Kalmus 1937.
the postmasters. The fast-growing flow of information strongly influenced social, political, and economical relations. It served to integrate the Swedish realm and to territorialize state power. It also linked the Baltic area to European culture.

Our research was based on the work of previous postal historians. These works describe Swedish postal history in terms of the positivistic and national paradigms of the first half of the twentieth century. The authors worked their way through a vast quantity of archive material on postal history that today is mostly held in the Swedish national archives (Riksarkivet), and their research thus focused on Sweden proper and the Crown’s needs. They applied the same notions of a national postal history as other European post historians. The same is true for the various provincial organizations within the Swedish Empire, all of which found their ‘national’ historiographer, highlighting the indigenous post and playing down Swedish influence.

Our project’s goal was not just to improve on this older research, which in its empirical results still stands strong, as Magnus Linnarsson shows in his overview of Swedish postal history and the literature. Instead, the idea was to focus on different aspects in an effort to open postal history to new scholarly approaches. We therefore sought contributions from Marianne Larsson and Enn Küng, who while not members of the research project have helped broaden its perspective and add more dimensions. Still, it is not yet possible to write a full-fledged history of the Swedish imperial postal organization in its entirety. Instead, we present new ideas that we hope will trigger further investigations.

One major objective was to perceive the post as the foundation stone for a news culture that saw news as a commodity and in which letters paved the way for new forms of social, economic, and political relationship. The Swedish Crown had a strong position in this development and used the post as an instrument in an ongoing state-building process. The nascent central authorities were in desperate need of internal communications in order to rule the realm. As a result, dozens of post offices were founded even in remote and sparsely populated parts of the country. The government also needed reliable and fast news contacts with the Continent and its diplomats in order to administer its international politics, economic relations, and, not least, its military campaigns.

Although these needs gave rise to a distinct interest in postal affairs, the Crown initially left the postal organization in the hands of a few experts, often of foreign origin, who offered their expertise in exchange for strong influence on the development of the post as well as a substantial part of the income. Magnus Linnarsson gives a short introduction to these beginnings; his dissertation provides greater detail on the economic models and bureaucratic rules for the post in Sweden proper.

15 Engelhardt 1926; Roessner 1986.
16 Rimborg 1997; Droste 2006b.
In 1648, the Peace of Westphalia acknowledged the post to be part of the *ius territoriale*, numbering among the inherent rights of any sovereign territory. Each Crown thus perceived the post to be part of its sovereignty and defended its control of it by all means, yet this did not prevent the actual organization from assuming a variety of different forms. The Swedish Crown had to consider the terms and statutes of its different provinces and their respective state organizations. In consequence, there were distinct differences between the royal postal services in Sweden proper and in its overseas provinces, where the post had been introduced independently from the Crown. It was only at the end of the seventeenth century that the Chancery Board gradually began to incorporate the provincial postal organizations into the main imperial administration, but the attempt met with considerable obstacles, and ultimately failed because of the loss of most Sweden’s overseas provinces in the Great Northern War (1700–1721).

In his chapter, Enn Küng analyses the Baltic postal system and Swedish efforts to supervise it in the late seventeenth century. The Chancery Board first needed to investigate how this post was run, something of which it obviously had only a vague notion. The same was true of services in Swedish Pomerania, yet unlike the Baltic provinces, however, its incorporation into the Swedish postal system was mostly organized from within Pomerania itself. In both provinces, a thorough investigation by post secretary Johan Lange on behalf of the Chancery Board in Stockholm marked the Crown’s attempt to organize postal affairs in line with its own ideas. Its success, however, should not be overestimated. Early modern notions of governance were not only based on a concept of sovereign bureaucratic rule, but on customary rights, privileges, and particular arrangements, and all served to colour any idea of a centralized Crown.

A perfect example is the postal network in the provinces Bremen and Verden. Not only was there a rival postal system based in Hamburg, but in addition Charles XI granted the post as a hereditary fief to a foreign noble family, the von Platen. The upshot was that there was never a unified Swedish post for the entire empire. Moreover, at all its borders the Swedish post had to adapt to adjacent postal systems in order to work with them. In the German provinces, foreign postal systems played a major role even inside the Swedish postal infrastructure.

The Swedish Crown, like other governments, had to acknowledge that the post opened up a new market in public news that was very hard to control – only Russia seems to have been closed to this news flow until the eighteenth century. In most countries, however, the need for information about European and domestic events was substantial, and it was not only the government that felt it. In the long run, Sweden’s role as a European power left it no alternative but to loosen its controls. In consequence, the amount of letters and news circulating in

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17 Roessner 1978.
18 Droste 2009a.
Sweden rose sharply. This news flow soon included much more than ‘hard’ political or economic information: it became possible to partake in cultural affairs as well.\textsuperscript{19} The Swedish elites tried to keep pace, endeavouring to stay up-to-date in matters of art, design, and fashion. As a result, the post opened the Baltic area to European culture. Kekke Stadin exemplifies what this meant for the social elites in their efforts to keep up with foreign fashion developments. In this transfer of fashion news, the post was not just mediating information and goods – postmasters also had a role in organizing the financial aspects of this transfer.

This is just one example of a postal organization that, despite the strong influence of the Crown, must be understood as reflecting the interplay of interests between the Crown, customers, and post service officials. In fact, the government’s influence was restricted due to its limited financial and bureaucratic resources. Above all it was the financial resources of this news culture that largely remained in the hands of the postmasters. They were, on the one hand, publicly employed Crown servants, much like customs officers, clerks, and other administrative personnel. Yet, on the other hand, all postmasters were the Crown’s collaborators in their localities, living on the various incomes that their positions offered, while in turn investing their private credit to uphold and improve the postal organization. Key here was their position in the local credit market and as newsagents. The government needed both this credit and the available news. In the government’s archive, these conflicting positions are for the most part invisible because of the Crown’s perception that theirs was the sovereign administration of a royal prerogative. In order to understand the post as well as we do the other public institutions of the day, we need a better understanding of the government’s archives, their limitations, and the actual functioning of the various bodies. And we have to learn much more about the local communities and their internal social and economic structures. This interplay of interest is analysed by Heiko Droste in seeking to answer the thorny question of the post officials’ – as well as other Crown servants’ – payment.

Another important aspect of the communications revolution in Sweden concerns media history as part of a transfer process within Sweden and with its European neighbours. Swedish media history has thus far focused on a number of core themes, with particularly strong interest in the history of the Swedish newspapers.\textsuperscript{20} However, the broader European perspective, with its influence on the news structure in Sweden, is often missing. Moreover, the interest in newspapers overlooks other news forms such as manuscript newspapers and the rich printed discourse on matters of state and religion.\textsuperscript{21} Instead, the focus often lies on state control and propaganda.\textsuperscript{22} These efforts were indeed considerable, but

\textsuperscript{19} Rystad 1983; Losman 1983.
\textsuperscript{20} Gustafsson & Rydén 2000.
\textsuperscript{21} Droste 2009b.
\textsuperscript{22} Forssberg 2005; Reuterswärd 2001.
their importance should not be overestimated, for it was not possible to close Sweden to the international news flow.23

Bureaucratic rules, economic interests, and the social praxis of a society still organized into estates, in which competing privileges and customary rights strove for recognition, shaped the postal organization. The post responded to changes in circumstance more successfully than most because it was not organized into guilds, which often hampered change. Improvements to the postal organization were possible as long as they were profitable or the state was willing to pay for them. Most of the time, however, improvements were introduced on behalf of privately financed ‘projects’, and only afterwards were they included in the official postal administration. This modus operandi left the post open to change, yet with hardly any financial risk on the part of the Crown.

The state and private customers alike demanded new postal routes, tighter schedules, and the co-ordination of tariffs, as well as timetable guarantees. Örjan Simonson analyses the impact of these organizational ideas on the postal system, guided by the theoretical perspectives of the sociologist Anthony Giddens and the economic historian Harold Innis, according to whom the speed and costs of communication, or the empire’s ‘bias of communication’ as Innis puts it, were crucial to the constitution of its societies. The printing press, the postal service, and paper as the storage medium together formed an early modern European media system that provided information more quickly and cheaply, and to broader layers of society.24 This favoured the integration of societies based on bureaucratic and commercial power over those based on ideological (religious) power relationships, for the former were dependent on a fast flow of information. Contrary to a common view of integration and communication before the advent of railways, the postal service conveyed letters faster, more regularly, and more reliably on land than by sea. Moreover, overseas correspondence was generally more expensive when using the Swedish Post Office.25 This had consequences for the integration of the Swedish Empire, although most correspondence networks within the Swedish Empire were regional and did not extend across the Baltic.26

As a public institution the post also needed symbols and a ‘corporate design’ that displayed the Crown’s authority. The postmasters and postilions had to represent the Crown’s dignity, while at the same time they needed the protection Crown service offered. Uniforms and their precursors therefore played an important role for the postal organization from the very beginning, as Marianne Larsson discusses in this volume. The Crown’s symbols have to be understood as

25 Simonson 2009b.
26 Simonson 2010.
a mark of the wearer’s standing in the eyes of his contemporaries. Uniform thus touches directly on the interplay of Crown and servant.

A lasting problem for any study of the Swedish post is the question of the primary source material, which, despite its richness, tends to highlight the Crown’s interests and influence at the expense of other agents. Enn Küng describes the means and limitations of the Chancery Board’s control of the post. In the 1680s, the Board still lacked reliable information on the Baltic provincial post, and the same was true of the German provinces. The Board’s efforts to centralize its organization conflicted with the interests of the local postmasters, who retained substantial influence over the organization, not least because they personally stood surety for the post’s much-needed credit.

This volume thus offers new perspectives on early modern postal history and the far-reaching implications of the new postal services. Many questions remain, of course. In particular, changes in the daily consumption of news need further investigation. How did readers handle the unprecedented flood of news, and how did it change their perception of the world, their mental map? Above all, how did public institutions change their internal organization to collect and process information on a scale that was unheard of only a few decades before?

Postal history has joined forces with media history just as we are experiencing the decline of the post as a national institution. Local post offices, which for centuries were at the heart of every community, have now disappeared in many places. Letterboxes are being removed; the notion of logistics centres is replacing the manual distribution of letters by postilions, who right into the twentieth century knew their customers personally. This process also seems to have triggered a renewed interest in the post’s former importance, as well as its future in the age of digitalized communications. Postal museums are being remodelled as museums of communication, embracing today’s electronic modes of communication. They also focus on an essentially idealized history of the ‘old’ post and its origins. The post was a pivotal institution both for the state and its subjects, shaping new modes of communications and new media forms. Its influence on the societies it served can hardly be overestimated, and stands in sharp contrast with the reduced position the post occupies today in contemporary culture and public awareness.
The Development of the Swedish Post Office, c. 1600–1721

Magnus Linnarsson

The Swedish Post Office was founded in tumultuous times in 1636. Sweden was engaged in the Thirty Years’ War, and it was chiefly the war that lay behind the formation of the postal service. The chancellor of the realm, Axel Oxenstierna, was well aware of the fundamental need for access to news and information, something that could best be provided by a postal system. In a letter to the Crown resident in Hamburg Oxenstierna wrote of the importance of communication that ‘So much power lies therein that the government in Sweden must continually be informed about actions out here [in Europe]’.¹

This chapter provides an overview of the establishment and development of the Swedish postal service from the beginning of the seventeenth century to the early eighteenth century. This was the first century of a structured postal service in Sweden, and was characterized by intense organization and reorganization. The aim is to give a general account of its organizational development. Hitherto there has been no such overview available in English, and for this reason the chapter also presents the postal expansion in the Swedish realm for an international audience. Furthermore, the historical outline is accompanied by a survey of the literature that touches on the development of the Swedish Post Office. In a nod to comprehensiveness, the chapter also offers a survey of the available primary source material.

In many respects, the development of the Swedish Post Office follows European trajectories, and in some respects the specific role models for the organization were found on the Continent. However, as the quotation from Axel Oxenstierna’s letter bears witness, the Swedish post was closely linked to state affairs. This chapter will argue that this connection to the state administration is typical of the Swedish case. Its relationships to the chancellery and the administrative nodes of the realm are distinguishing features of the Swedish Post Office, and should be emphasized when comparing it with other European states. It will also be argued that the method used for the actual transportation of the mail,

¹ Memorandum for Johan Adler Salvius, 3 February 1633, AOSB, I:8, p. 141.
using peasant farmers, is a feature that further distinguishes the Swedish post from other European systems.

The literature

The research on the history of the Swedish Post Office is extensive in detail, but meagre when it comes to theoretical and analytical depth. Additionally, much of what there is was not the work of professional historians, but of former employees of the Post Office. The general tenor of this research is to glorify the Post Office, describing its creation as the start of a long series of successes. The major part of the work is best categorized as gathering source material rather than analytical studies of the postal organization. Most of the research operates from the perspective of the state administration, which in turn is its focal point. The advantage is that these scholarly laymen worked meticulously in the archives, and thanks to their efforts the formal development of the postal service is well known.

For this reason, most of the previous research on the Swedish Post Office is strictly national, a pattern that many other countries follow suit. Although Ludwig Kalmus wrote his Weltgeschichte der Post as early as 1937, international research on the postal service has mainly concentrated on developments in individual countries. Additionally, most of the existing scholarship pays attention solely to postal organization. Discussions and studies of the postal service in a broader context, and in relation to the development of society as a whole, are almost wholly absent. A noticeable exception is the historian Wolfgang Behringer’s work on the post in northern Germany. Behringer connects the postal service to the development of newspapers and the emergence of a general public. Another work with a wider perspective is Heiko Droste’s study of Sweden’s diplomats in the seventeenth century.

The modern historiography of the Swedish Post Office starts with a former postmaster, Teodor Holm. He conducted research in the national archives in the early twentieth century, and his efforts resulted in an imposing nine-volume work on the early history of the Swedish Post Office until 1718. Holm is the foremost example of research conducted from the perspective of the post as a government agency. His works concentrate on the postal organization as if it was wholly disconnected from the rest of society. Only rarely does he relate doings in

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2 Kalmus 1937.
3 Examples of this national research are Beale 1998; John 1995; Vaillé 1946; Fedele & Gallenga 1988.
4 Behringer 2003; see also Gestrich 1994.
5 Droste 2006b; Allen 1972 is another study on the importance of diplomacy for the development of postal services.
6 Two examples of earlier works are Bergfalk 1846, and Thurgren 1858.
7 Holm 1906–1929.
the Post Office to more general political developments. Even so, Teodor Holm’s research forms a starting-point for Swedish postal history. His exertions provided the field with invaluable empirical foundations.

After Holm, a number of books were written in conjunction with various anniversaries within the postal organization. Nils Forssell was responsible for the three-hundredth anniversary publication in 1936, and gave a comprehensive account of the organization up to the 1900s. He shares Holm’s perspective, although he does try to examine the conditions at local post offices. Another of the previous Swedish researchers is Paul Gerhard Heurgren who wrote on the Swedish military post and the postal service’s stagecoach traffic, while Johannes Rudbeck and Ernst Grape have contributed with books on the Swedish sea-mail and on a prosopographical study of the postmasters.

Similar work has been done on the post in other Nordic countries. In Denmark, Otto Madsen has written on its postal history, covering the period to 1711. In Norway, Finn Erhard Johannessen has surveyed the period between 1647 and 1920. The postal service in Finland was established when the country was part of the Swedish realm, and for that reason Finnish developments are covered, albeit briefly, in both Holm and Forssell; it has since been studied more specifically by Jukka-Pekka Pietiäinen. The early history of the Finnish post to some degree coincides with that of the Swedish, especially when it comes to ordinances and formal regulations.

Amongst the more recent works on postal history is the Swedish historian Mats Bladh, who has written about the deregulation of the Post Office in the 1990s from a historical perspective. He has analyzed the earliest period of the post, using economic theory and the concept of the ‘natural monopoly’, which in his view is what the Post Office became in the course of the seventeenth century. Bladh’s book focuses on the twentieth century, and only briefly studies the early history. This is in some ways typical. The bulk of the research on the postal organization concerns later periods, while studies of the seventeenth century are few. Besides Bladh, the most recent work on postal issues in the seventeenth century was conducted by two ethnologists: Britta Lundgren has studied the women in the postal organization, looking at gender roles and processes, and paying particular attention to the widows of the postmasters in the seventeenth century.

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8 Forssell 1936; a publication from the 350th anniversary is Lindgren 1986.
10 Heurgren 1961; Heurgren 1964; Rudbeck 1933; Grape 1951; for a statistical study of the amount of mail in the seventeenth century, see Nylander 1928.
11 Madsen 1991; Johannessen 1997; of the more recent works, most study specific aspects of the postal organization. One of the most recent examples from Denmark is Sune Christian Pedersen’s doctoral thesis on surveillance, espionage, and mail correspondence in the eighteenth century (Pedersen 2008).
12 Pietiäinen 1998.
13 Bladh 1999, for the discussion on natural monopolies, see pp. 59–60.
century;\textsuperscript{14} while Marianne Larsson has studied post uniforms and changes to the clothing of Post Office personnel, analyzing the negotiations between institution and individual regarding such changes.\textsuperscript{15}

Lastly, the development of postal systems is often connected to overall improvements in communications in the early modern period, sometimes referred to as the ‘communications revolution’.\textsuperscript{16} Scholars interested in the field invariably hold the postal service to be fundamental, yet few of them have gone on to examine the Post Office itself. This type of research promises to broaden perspectives on postal history, and to complement studies of the postal organization itself.\textsuperscript{17} The account of the literature presented here, however, has concentrated on works that explicitly emphasize the development of postal services during the seventeenth century.

The sources for Swedish postal history

The official records of the Swedish Post Office form a comparatively large historical archive, comprising over 150 metres of material and beginning in the early seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{18} The documents are held at the Swedish National Archive in Stockholm (RA). The collection consists of the records of the General Board of the Post Office and its predecessors, and comprises four subsections with the records of the postmaster general (the main archive); the post-office cashier; the postal court; and the postal ombudsman. The first two are the central sections, whereas the latter two hold very little material. In addition to this main archive, at various times the local post offices delivered their archives to RA.

The records have had a complex history, one that reflects the period when the archive was split. Some of the postal records were kept in the archive of the Chancery Board, stored at RA, while the greater part was kept in the Post Office’s own archive. This division was source of anxiety for both RA and the Post Office, leading on various occasions to quarrels over where the papers should be kept. The dispute did not end until 1976, when the oldest records, held

\textsuperscript{14} Lundgren 1987; Lundgren 1990.
\textsuperscript{15} Larsson 2008.
\textsuperscript{16} This is a perspective emphasized by Wolfgang Behringer (2003). It also bifurcates the media research conducted by great names such as Marshall McLuhan (1965) and Harold Innis (2007), who have both written on the significance of the media, in this case the postal service, for political decisions. An interesting historical study in this direction is Geoffrey Parker’s book on Philip II (Parker 1998).
\textsuperscript{17} This would include literature on communications in general, the rise of newspapers, the development of war propaganda, and many other forms of communication systems. Some examples can be found in Bethencourt & Egmond 2007; Ericsson 2002; Reuterswärd 2001; Dooley & Baron 2001.
\textsuperscript{18} Ludwigs 1984, p. 3.
at the Post Office, were lodged with RA. The fusion of the two archives in the 1970s means that all the postal documents prior to 1850 are now stored at RA.19

Broadly speaking the archive offers a very full picture, with most series starting in 1698, and consisting of almost complete sequences of drafts of letters and memorandums, the postmaster general’s journals, financial documents, and the postal administration’s correspondence.20 For anyone interested in the history of the Swedish Post Office between 1700 and 1850, the archive offers an overwhelmingly rich material. The archive also comprises some more fragmentary records that go back to the 1630s. These older documents come from an early collection that was assembled at RA in the nineteenth century. Early in the twentieth century it was dissolved, and the documents restored to their original archives once their provenance could be settled.21

Accordingly, the present arrangement of the records has only been in place since the 1980s. The greater part of the archive of the postmaster general starts around 1700, at much the same time as we can first talk about the Swedish Post Office as a civil service department. The archive’s complex history should be kept in mind. Papers have indisputably been lost over time in the course of the various archival rearrangements. This is especially noticeable for the earliest period, where the archive holds hardly any material at all. Another reason for the lack of older sources is of course the fire at the Royal Palace in 1697, where the national archives were stored. Most of the palace was destroyed and two thirds of the national archive went up in flames, while the records of the Chancery Board were severely damaged.22 The primary sources for the establishment and early history of the Swedish Post Office must therefore be sought elsewhere than the official archive of the postmaster general.

The Swedish Post Office was built up to serve the needs of the state, and sources for the early history of the post can therefore be found in the state archives. This is especially true of the archives of the Council of the Realm and of the Chancery Board. Both these institutions, the first of medieval origin and the latter founded in 1634, can be viewed as the responsible authorities for the Swedish post. Indeed, the governing function of the Chancery Board was explicitly stated in the ordinances for the post.23 For both these institutions there are almost complete series of proceedings and drafts preserved, and it is possible to follow many of the discussions about how and when the post should be organi-

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19 For an account of the discussions, see Setterkrans 1957, pp. 6–11.
20 There are no minutes of the proceedings of the early postal organization. Postal questions were decided by the Chancery Board, and the information can thus be found in Board’s records.
21 Ludwigs 1984, pp. 2–3.
zed throughout the seventeenth century. Likewise, the rules and regulations for the Post Office are preserved in ordinances and government edicts. In 1707 the most important of these were gathered and printed in a single volume, edited by the postmaster general, Johan Schmedeman. The volume was distributed to the postmasters in an attempt to inform them of the current rules.

However, the official authority of the Chancery Board is another cause of confusion. Because of the central significance of the postal service, many other parts of the state administration were involved in its organization, with the Chancery Board as the central node. Therefore, many documents that illuminate the history of the post can be found in various, and sometimes surprising, parts of the archives of the administration. As an example, the records of the county governors and the archives of the local civil administration contain material on postal development. The memorandum written by the archivist Göran Setterkrans is still probably the best introduction to this material. Besides the archive held at RA, material from the Post Office can also be found in the regional state archives across Sweden.

There are other, unofficial, sources to be used in the writing of postal history, especially for the period before 1700, when surviving official records are few. The most obvious is the vast correspondence preserved from the seventeenth century. In some cases we have voluminous archives of the correspondence of leading figures. The collection of chancellor Axel Oxenstierna’s correspondence is the largest, and is available in print, *The works and correspondence of Axel Oxenstierna*. Another large archive is the correspondence of Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie, chancellor of the realm from 1660, who held the Post Office in fief in the 1670s; a collection that contains a great deal of material regarding the Post Office. Besides Oxenstierna and De la Gardie there are many different collections of letters sent from correspondents in Europe to public officials in Sweden. In some cases this material gives information about the post’s organization and everyday problems concerning mail transportation. This type of source can of course also be viewed as official in nature, since most of the correspondence was between people who held official positions, or in other ways had influence on the politics and administration of the state and the Post Office.

Even so, why are the surviving sources for the early history of the Swedish Post Office so dominated by official material? Why are there so few sources that say something about its everyday business, or about the postal functions in the smaller cities around the country? One might expect the local postmasters, and the post offices throughout the country, to have left more traces than they have. There is no surviving private archive for a Swedish postmaster in the seven-

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24 *Kongelige och andra wederbörandes förordningar angående postväsendet 1707.*
25 Setterkrans 1957.
26 The bulk of De la Gardie’s archive is held by RA.
27 See, for example, Droste 1999; Droste 2006b.
teenth century. What we have instead is a large number of fragments, letters sent to the leadership in Stockholm, and so on. Yet the unavoidable conclusion is that we simply do not have the sources, especially the correspondence that would give us an insight to everyday life at the Post Office, and the obstacles the position of postmaster could involve. In fact, this argues in favour of the point that such missing sources were considered unofficial in nature: the postmasters did not regard the papers as property of the Post Office, but rather as a part of their private archive. These missing sources would have given us valuable material to compare with the official records, of which there is an abundance. The upshot is that we know fairly well how the Swedish Post Office was meant to operate, but not how it worked in reality.

Methodologically, this means that an investigation of the early history of the Swedish Post Office cannot be confined to sources produced within the organization. A fair picture of the Swedish post will only be obtained with the use of diverse, complex, and fragmentary source material. Yet the historian must be aware of the dominance of the official sources and scrutinize them carefully. The official material must be regarded as the mouthpiece of the Crown and the postal management. Opposition to the organization is hard to find in these sources.28 Likewise, the fact that the official material has survived to the present does not necessarily mean that the organization set out in ordinances and similar sources was the one used in reality.

The Swedish postal service was a central node in the state administration, and papers that tell of its development are today found in a wide variety of archives. For this reason, the first traces of a Swedish postal system are not to be found in the postal archive. Instead, we must turn to the records of the royal chancellery in the sixteenth century to find the beginnings of the Swedish Post Office.

**Before the Post Office**

The first attempts to arrange a system of posts in Sweden can be traced back to the reigns of Gustav I’s sons. In the second half of the sixteenth century a courier-based system was set up to carry messages between various administrative centres across the kingdom. These couriers and royal messengers, in Swedish called **enspännare**, functioned as an internal postal system for the state, and are mentioned in various financial accounts from the royal chancellery.29 Nils Fors-

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28 A point made by Reuterswärd 2001, pp. 75–76.
29 A roundup of staff in 1622 lists three couriers as ‘postal messengers to the border’ (Översikt över personal i kansliet, odaterat 1622, Kanslikollegium, Kanslibokhållarens stater, F I, vol. 8, RA); see also, Mantal på Cantzelij, 10 November 1619, Kanslikollegium, Personalförteckningar och meritlistor, F IV, vol. 1, RA, which mentions two couriers. This arrangement survived the foundation of the Post Office, for in 1638 four messengers are mentioned in the budget for the chancellery (Cantslij Staten, undated, 1638, Kanslikollegium, Kanslibokhållarens stater, F I, vol. 8, RA).
sell has analyzed the messenger system, and has found that until the 1650s the Crown financed a number of different couriers: in the general ledger for 1645, for example, there are forty-six names noted as having been employed as such. Apart from these messengers, mail was delivered by individual travellers or by the private carriers who also carried correspondence, inland or abroad.

With the wars of the early seventeenth century, the need for reliable communications with Europe increased. The Swedish government was permanently afraid of being uninformed about events in Europe, as chancellor Axel Oxenstierna was painfully aware. From the beginning of the century a network of Swedish informants, called correspondents, was established in various European cities. These men sent regular written reports to Stockholm and to chancellor Oxenstierna, with information about the political situation on the Continent.

The information gathered was crucial to the Swedish government and its perception of the political climate in Europe. However, the largest problem was not the procurement of information, but its transportation to Stockholm.

It was primarily to enhance the transport of the correspondents’ reports that the Swedish administration tried to improve the efficiency of its postal connections to Europe. The Crown’s requirements were placed above all others, and different ideas were put forward for how the post’s organization might best support the needs of the administration. Unlike a number of other European states, they did not focus on the merchants’ requirements, of which the closest example was the Danish Post Office, founded in 1624. It was expressly concerned with mercantile correspondence, and according to its founding ordinances the running of the post should be the responsibility of four merchants. The role model for the Danish post was the postal system in Hamburg, where trade was the driving force in postal development.

It was in Hamburg that the Dutchman Lennart van Sorgen was appointed Sweden’s first official agent, and he was consulted when the moment came to improve Swedish postal communications. He worked out a plan for a permanent postal service to Stockholm, and suggested a relay post according to known principles: in relays, selected peasant farmers would transport the letters a short distance, handing over the mailbag to the next farmer. The arrangement would transport a letter from Hamburg to Stockholm in approximately five days. The Swedish government adopted parts of van Sorgen’s proposal, and a messenger route was opened in 1620. The major difference was that the Crown used couriers to transport the letters, instead of the suggested relay post. The messenger

30 Forssell 1936, i. pp. 26–27.
34 Letter from Lennart van Sorgen, 21 February 1620, Oxenstiernska samlingen, E 721, RA.
route ran southwards from Stockholm, crossing the Sound from Helsingborg to Helsingør. From there, the mail continued across Danish territory to Hamburg, availing itself of an old agreement between the two kingdoms.35

After the Swedish intervention in the Thirty Years’ War in 1630, the Swedish army built up a postal organization in the occupied parts of the Holy Roman Empire. When the organization was at its peak in 1635, it engaged a number of postmasters at different post offices. In most cases they already belonged to the German imperial post, and the commonest solution for the Swedish administration seems to have been merely to replace a Catholic postmaster with a trusted Protestant. In most places the service seems to have continued without interruption, and, except for the man in charge, with mostly the same personnel. In a few places new Post Offices were established alongside the older imperial offices, as was the case in Leipzig, where a Swedish postmaster was installed immediately after the capture of the city.36 The man who was appointed royal postmaster there was Anders Wechel, a German who originally worked as a clerk and a correspondent for Axel Oxenstierna.37 He would later move to Stockholm in 1635 where he organized the Swedish postal service.

This approach, with German postmasters appointed by the Swedish Crown, was typical of how the state solved its organizational problems. The Swedish army’s successes were in part due to foreign expertise and new forms of organization, and a similar willingness to import experienced personnel influenced many parts of the administration.38 The German postmasters had the experience and knowledge of running larger postal organizations and, as the future would show, the Swedish administration took full advantage of their competence. The foremost example of this was the recruitment of Anders Wechel as the first director of the Swedish Post Office in 1636. This goes some way to explaining why the Swedish postal service was organized in the way it was. Formerly, mail transports had been solved in a very simple and expensive way. As the amount of mail increased, the transportation costs rose to intolerable levels, while the system proved itself more than unreliable. Change was essential, and the models for a new organization were to be found on the Continent. The Crown already had experience of organizing its military forces along more bureaucratic lines; adopting similar methods to organize its postal service came naturally.39

Thus as of 1620 the Swedish Crown, with the help of Lennart van Sorgen, had in place a permanent and regular postal route between Hamburg and Stock-

36 The royal Swedish postmaster in Leipzig had clashed with his imperial colleague over who should control the postage the mail was generating (Heurgren 1961, pp. 38–40); see also Sveriges krig 1611–1632, p. 346.
37 See his letters to Oxenstierna in Oxenstiernska samlingen, E 749, RA.
39 More examples of this method of importing expertise are to be found in the production of drapery goods and ironware (see Mörner 2001, pp. 190–200).
holm. Most likely it was the increasing correspondence with the Crown’s correspondents that lay behind this move, and the service certainly seems to have been a clear improvement on previous efforts. That said, the connection consisted of only one messenger route, and nothing was done to organize the postal communication inside the realm. This was in line with the nature of state administration in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which in Sweden as in many other European countries was not the meticulously formal apparatus it would become. The nobility continued to rely on their estates as a way to build up independent power. The Stockholm–Hamburg post was the Swedish administration’s first experience of a formalized postal service, and should be viewed in much the same way as the knowledge acquired by the Swedish State officials who perforce worked on the Continent during the Thirty Years’ War. The Hamburg route and the postal network in the occupied territories made European knowledge available to the Swedish administration.

The founding of the Post Office

The experience that the Swedish Crown drew from the postal route to Hamburg was to grow in subsequent years. The issue of postal communications was dealt with by the Council of the Realm and by other leading members of the government. One example was Post-Patent und Salva-Guardia, a privilege for the German postmasters issued on 30 October 1633 by chancellor Axel Oxenstierna in the name of Queen Christina. Its aim was to reintroduce the postal service to certain cities in the occupied territories. In the text Oxenstierna gives reasons why it was so important that the postal messengers should not be hindered.

In the public interest and for the extension and preservation of indispensable commerce, the postal services in the [Holy Roman] Empire, to the Netherlands, […] France and other places shall be reinstated and put in order.

The chancellor continues that every effort must be made to avoid ‘the indispensable postal service in the empire once again falling into decline and complete ruin, in almost irreparable damage’. As well as ordering the reintroduction of postal services, the privilege forbade the removal of the postmasters’ horses without paying for them, and prohibited acts of cruelty towards the postmaster and his family.

In its rhetoric about postal communications on the Continent it was mainly these two arguments that the Swedish government emphasized: its importance

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41 Post-Patent und Salva-Guardia, 30 October 1633, Svenska postförordningar på tyska, excerptsamling, 1631–1724, PM.
42 Post-Patent und Salva-Guardia, 30 October 1633, Svenska postförordningar på tyska, excerptsamling, 1631–1724, PM.
for commerce; and its importance to the community or the ‘common weal’. This rhetoric differs from the contemporary discussion in Sweden, as do the arguments for why the post should be established. In Sweden, this was largely linked to the widespread abuse of the peasant farmers’ obligation to provide horses for transport for nobles and royal messengers, the so-called *skjutsningsplik* or duty of carriage. This issue had been a major point for discussion in the Swedish Diet for many years, and with the increasing need for resources following the wars in the 1610s onwards, the number of complaints grew.\(^{43}\) The peasants protested at the burden of having to offer free food, horses, and transport. Since the Middle Ages the king and his messengers had the right to these services, but nobles and others claiming to travel on the king’s business exploited this by excusing themselves from paying, an abuse that could even end in the farmer being assaulted if he refused to comply with the nobleman’s demands.\(^{44}\) The discussions in the Council in Stockholm centred on this point, and the councillors all expressed their desire to relieve the peasantry of this ancient burden. A point worth noting, though, is that the nobles’ enthusiasm for putting an end to the misuse was essentially self-preservation. Many of the peasants who were abused by travellers lived on aristocratic lands, and in the nobles’ opinion it was much better that the peasants worked on their estates instead.\(^{45}\) Yet they failed to arrive at any real alternatives or solutions to the problem, and it was at this stage the question of a postal system entered the Swedish debate.

The misuse of *skjutsningsplik* has been in focus for many historians, and combating the abuse has been seen as an important reason for the establishment of the Swedish post.\(^{46}\) Nils Forssell agrees with Teodor Holm about the significance of the abuse, arguing that the misuse was the main explanation for the establishment of the Swedish post.\(^{47}\) This point of view is echoed in the other Nordic countries. Otto Madsen finds the problem of abuse important, and in Denmark the peasant farmers considered it so burdensome that they were willing to pay money to the king to escape it.\(^{48}\) Finn Erhard Johannessen agrees that the abuse of *skjutsningsplik* was equally important in Norway, but solely as the trigger for the organization of the postal service; his emphasis is on the growing need for the state administration to correspond as the main explanation for the establishment of the Post Office.\(^{49}\)

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\(^{43}\) Holm 2007, pp. 131–135, shows the increasing number of complaints about *skjutsningsplik* from 1600.

\(^{44}\) Mörner 2001, p. 254; Forssell 1936, i. pp. 16–21.

\(^{45}\) See, for example, see the minutes of the Council of the Realm: 30 June 1631, SRP, ii. p. 105; 9 November 1632, SRP, ii. pp. 210–211; 23 October 1633, SRP, iii. p. 210.

\(^{46}\) Holm 1906–1929, i. pp. 79–89.

\(^{47}\) Forssell 1936, i. pp. 15–16, 35–36 and 116.


\(^{49}\) Johannessen 1997, i. p. 17.
After the experiences gained in the Holy Roman Empire, Oxenstierna and the
government began to discuss in earnest the founding of a Swedish Post Office.\textsuperscript{30} The result was that on 20 February 1636 the Council of the Realm in Stockholm
issued an ordinance for postal messengers, \textit{Förordning om Post-bådhen}, the
document upon which the postal organization would be built. The ordinance laid out a
network of postal routes spread thinly across the country. The preamble reads:

\begin{quote}
We Christina etc. make known, that since we have graciously found it necessary
to establish, in all of our provinces in all of our kingdom, some regular post
messengers, to the relief for our faithful subjects [from \textit{skjutsningsplikt}]. There-
fore we have confirmed and issued the following postal ordinance, with which the
postal messengers, and all others, shall comply.\textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}

The connection to \textit{skjutsningsplikt} abuses is emphasized, for the stated reason
for establishing the Post Office is that a postal system would lessen the burden
on the peasantry. The ordinance itself is a very simple. It says nothing about the
possibilities of mail correspondence or the need for safe postal connections to be
used by the Crown. It only describes the terms and regulations for the peasant
farmers who were supposed to carry the mail. On the other hand, this intro-
duction of peasant farmers as postal messengers is the unique feature of the ordi-
nance. All other plans or drafts for postal communication in Sweden had thus
focused on the use of royal couriers. That meant a single person transporting the
mail from A to B, no matter what the distance. The postal route to Hamburg in
1620 used couriers, and this was long the standard way for the government to
send written messages.

The ordinance from 1636 introduced a completely new system for mail
delivery. Trusted local peasant farmers would be selected as post-farmers to
transport the mail between the towns in their vicinity. Consequently, they would
remain within set boundaries – beyond which other post-farmers would carry
the mail further. The inspiration for this came from the Continent, where deli-
vering letters using relay posts was well known. In the Swedish case, however, it
is the use of post-farmers that stands out as a European exception.\textsuperscript{52} Hence it was
peasant farmers, preferably those who could read and write, who would trans-
port the letters. Those recruited for the task were meant to live twenty or thirty
kilometres distant from one another. Each post-farmer would have one or two
farm boys – post boys – to help him with the mail, and it was the boys’ task to
run with the mailbag to the next farm. In this way the letters would be relayed

\textsuperscript{30} See, for example, see the minutes of the Council of the Realm: 9 October 1635, SRP, v. pp.
\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Förordning om Post-Bådhen}, royal ordinance, Stockholm, 20 February 1636.
\textsuperscript{52} Sweden and Norway (then part of Denmark) used peasant farmers to organize the mail
transportation. In other European countries the usual solution was to employ specialized
manpower for the conveyance of the letters (see Bladh 1999, p. 28).
along the postal routes. The post boy was to be equipped with a post-horn to sound as he approached the next farm. At his signal the next post boy would prepare himself to take over the mailbag. Furthermore, the post boys were instructed to carry a staff to protect themselves from thieves and wild animals, and on their chests they were meant to wear a royal post blazon.

According to the ordinance, the post boys had to be able to cover ten kilometres in two hours. This time-limit was stressed in the text, and inability to keep to the prescribed time was punishable by eight days imprisonment.\(^\text{53}\) Similarly, if the post boys were unable to run with the mailbag the farmer would have to run with it instead, again under threat of imprisonment. The peasants received compensation from the Crown for their service as post-farmers. The initial arrangement, though not stated in the ordinance, exempted them from army conscription, corvée, and other obligations. Besides the regulations for the post-farmers, the ordinance also addressed the issue of post administrators in the towns, to be recruited from among the town’s inhabitants, and responsible for opening the mailbag. It was specified that post administrators should be able to read and write so that, where necessary, letters to the city could be addressed to him. He was also to distribute the mail to the local noblemen – the only people mentioned in the ordinance as receiving mail.

Anders Wechel was duly appointed director of the ‘whole Post Office in the kingdom’. He was also granted an annual salary of 600 dr sm.\(^\text{54}\) The first postal routes expanded as the organization grew, and farmers were recruited along the roads. In 1636 there were four main postal routes, all fanning out from Stockholm: the most important was the route to Hamburg; the other three went to Gothenburg, to the mining districts, and to northern Sweden. A postal route to Finland was established in 1638.\(^\text{55}\)

Even after the Post Office’s foundation in 1636, however, not all mail was transported under its aegis, and over the next decades a variety of parallel methods remained in use. The most obvious for individuals was to ask occasional travellers or friends to deliver letters. Another option was to make use of the message system run by the local administration (härads post) or the church (klockarposten). These alternative systems, often based on old traditions, worked alongside the Post Office. Little research has been done on these alternative postal systems, however, although they seem to have been subsumed into the Post Office in due course.\(^\text{56}\) Similarly, the army and Swedish diplomats sometimes used alternative ways of sending letters.

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\(^{53}\) Förordning om Post-Bådhen, royal ordinance, Stockholm, 20 February 1636.
\(^{54}\) Royal privilege for postmaster Anders Wechel, 20 February 1636, RR, RA; see also Forssell 1936, i. p. 45.
\(^{55}\) Holm 1906–1929, i. pp. 151–157; see also Nylander 1963.
\(^{56}\) Bladh 1999, pp. 36–37 gives a brief discussion of these alternative postal systems.
The timing of the introduction of the Post Office, however, coincided with the culmination of a period of intense organization for the Swedish public administration. Following the death of Gustav II Adolf in 1632, chancellor Axel Oxenstierna drove through a series of thorough administrative reforms. In 1634 the country’s first Instrument of Government, akin to a constitution, was introduced, and the central administrative authorities were divided according to task or competence, and organized as boards (kollegier). In 1635 the local administration was altered by the introduction of county governors, designated the Crown’s representatives in the localities.57 These reforms were preceded by the introduction of the court of appeal in 1614 and several ordinances for the royal chancellery and other parts of the administration.58 The first three decades of the seventeenth century were characterized by this detailed organization of the central parts of the state apparatus.59

A changing organization

After the ordinance establishing the Post Office in 1636 came the development phase. Here the appointment of Anders Wechel as postmaster general is worth considering. As already noted, the habit of recruiting foreign military experts had spread in the 1620s to the civil administration. The Crown started to lease state revenue-gathering to tax-farmers. An important number of leaseholders were foreigners, who were given lucrative contracts by the state. From the Crown’s point of view, this was a way of obtaining ready cash for the administration. However, as Mats Hallenberg has shown, it was also a way of importing expertise to the Crown’s ‘manufactures’, in hope of modernizing the businesses.60 In a similar way, Wechel was recruited to bring expertise to the postal organization. The newly appointed postmaster general had little time in which to carry out his task, as he died soon after in 1637. Following his death his widow, Gese Wechel, took over the management of the post, and on 25 October 1638 the Council of the Realm confirmed her appointment.61 This solution was not unusual in Sweden in order to keep enterprises going when the head of the concern died.62 Even so, the appointment of Gese Wechel must be viewed as something of an exception considering the high position of the postmaster general in the state administration.

58 Herlitz 1964, pp. 106, 118.
61 Confirmation, Gese Wechel, 25 October 1638, RR, RA.
62 Lundgren 1987, pp. 23–34; other examples of the literature on the role of executrices and the status of widows in general are given in Cavallo & Warner 1999; and, for the Swedish post, Holm 1906–1929, iv. pt. 3 pp. 24–44.
Gese Wechel was thus put in charge of the Post Office. At her side she had Bernhard Stein von Steinhausen, who in 1638 was appointed generalriksschultz. Together they seem to have exercised joint control over the Post Office. This period is one of the more peculiar in the history of the Swedish post, and we do not know much about it. The title, generalriksschultz, held by von Steinhausen seems to have been instituted just for him. No one else, before or since, has been generalriksschultz. Exactly what the man did is also unclear. Whatever the case, the whole curious episode ended in 1642 amid complaints about Gese Wechel’s ability to run the business.63

In October 1642, Johan von Beijer was appointed postmaster general.64 Like Anders Wechel, von Beijer was German, and had entered Swedish service in the early seventeenth century, working his way up the growing Swedish administration.65 He received his appointment as postmaster general on 2 January 1643.66 Amongst his tasks were to appoint and remove postmasters and post-farmers all over the realm. He was also to maintain the postal route to Hamburg and to communicate with the foreign correspondents of the Swedish Crown. This latter task was the origin of the Swedish press, since the information received by von Beijer was subsequently printed in the first regular Swedish newspaper, Ordinari Post Tijdender.67 His instructions also gave him the right to collect the surplus of the postal rates for all letters sent from the Post Office in Stockholm, an order that comes immediately after a paragraph that expresses the government’s hope that in the future the Post Office will produce a sufficient surplus for the business to finance itself.68

The same day that von Beijer was appointed, a new ordinance for the Post Office was issued by the Council of the Realm. In the preamble to the ordinance, the postal service and the new regulations are explained.

Our faithful subjects and inhabitants of the kingdom, whose letters conveniently and safely, both in the kingdom and in its dependent provinces and abroad […] shall be forth sent and ordered. […] but as it is not yet put in its perfect state and order.69

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64 Authorization for Johan von Beijer as general postmaster, 15 October 1642, RR, RA.
65 Jacobsson 1922, pp. 70–74.
67 Holmberg 2000, pp. 42–45; for a European perspective on developments, see Schröder 1995; and Behringer 2003.
68 Styffe 1856, pp. 459–460.
69 General rijkzens Postordning, royal ordinance, Stockholm, 2 January 1643; the same text was republished on 19 July 1645 (Kongelige och andra wederbörandes förordningar angående postväsendet 1707, p. 200).
The Post Office’s organization gives the impression of being in a shaky state. The first seven years of operation had led to the conclusion that further rules were needed. The ordinance of 1643 stipulates and repeats most of the rules from 1636, but also gives information on the Post Office’s finances. In paragraph five, the government says that all private letters sent by post must be charged according to tariff issued on the same day as the ordinance; the postage paid for private letters was meant to finance the rest of the postal organization. In the same section, the local postmasters are instructed to submit their financial records to the postal administration quarterly.

The ordinance of 1643 laid the foundation for the postal organization for years to come. With a number of additions, the ordinance was the main regulation for the Swedish post until the 1670s. Of the additions, the ordinance of 1646 regulating post-farmers was the most important. It deals explicitly with the post-farmers responsible for carrying the mail. The major change on 1636 is that from now on horses were to be used to transport mail on the postal route to Hamburg. Another difference is that the requirement to run a mile in less than two hours with the mail was now removed – among a variety of reasons was the simple dearth of functioning clocks.

The main thrust of the regulations of the 1640s was to devolve the administration of the post to local post offices, for it was here that the organization was to be run. The local postmasters were given control over the post-farmers, and the organization’s personnel were given certain responsibilities to fulfil. This organizational framework was to remain in place until the eighteenth century. It is striking how similar it is to the reorganization of the county governors in 1635, a reform of local administration in which parts of the Crown’s control, mainly over fiscal matters, were devolved to the local level.

Such was the organization that in 1643 was given to Johan von Beijer as a sort of fief. He was allowed to make money on postage, and had full executive power over the organization. However, the Crown never surrendered its overall control of the postal service, and von Beijer could hardly do anything with the post that the king and the Council did not approve. The arrangement appears to have worked well, and initially there was no trace of conflict between von Beijer and the Crown. The first obstacle came in 1654, when Queen Christina gave the Post Office in fief to baron Wilhelm Taube, most likely as a reward for his services to the Crown. The official motive for this move, which expressly contravened von Beijer’s instructions, was to lend the Post Office respect and authority. The whole arrangement bears witness to the unpredictability of the early modern system of rewards and personal loyalties. To further confuse the modern obser-

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70 Kongelige och andra wederbörandes förordningar angående postväsendet 1707, p. 211.
71 Forssell 1936, i. p. 53.
73 Forssell 1936, i. p. 51.
ver, von Beijer himself was rewarded at the same time, ennobled for his previous work at the Post Office.\textsuperscript{74} This is somehow symptomatic of the latter part of the 1600s, a period that saw the number of professional men raised to the nobility rapidly increase. This was due to the need for noblemen in the growing state administration, where the higher positions were reserved for the nobility. In a European perspective, the older Swedish nobility was very small, and in order to fill the new positions the solution was to raise new families to the nobility.\textsuperscript{75}

Taube thus became postmaster general in 1654, and at first von Beijer worked with him in the administration of the post. Soon enough conflict loomed between the two. von Beijer appears to have been the more aggressive, and in 1658 he was removed from the Post Office. After his removal, von Beijer started a private postal route that competed with the royal post, and so continued his struggle against the official Post Office.\textsuperscript{76} The conflict dragged on until 1661, when Taube died and Johan von Beijer was once again appointed head of the Post Office.\textsuperscript{77} This time he held the post by a lease that stipulated that he should pay the Crown a fee of 14,000 dr sm a year for the privilege.\textsuperscript{78} Even so, von Beijer did not get complete control of the Post Office. The Crown still reserved the right to regulate the postal service by means of ordinances, regulations, and exemptions. As an example, von Beijer was allowed to appoint all postmasters except those in Hamburg and Helsingör, who would continue to be appointed by the Chancery Board.

The second period of von Beijer’s leadership was dominated by the Post Office’s finances. On the whole, matters seem to have been less well organized and more troublesome than in his first era. One explanation might be the constant problems with letters that were to be sent postage-free. In the lease, the Crown reserved the right to send letters on the king’s business or other public affairs free of postage within the administration. Once a year, the cost of the postage-free letters would be deducted from von Beijer’s lease-fee. However, the misuse of the right to postage-free letters may have led to a decrease in the quantity of regular postage that was paid.\textsuperscript{79} Either way, von Beijer had great difficulties managing the post, and in 1668 the contract was cancelled and von Beijer made postmaster general, instead of leaseholder, until his death in 1669.\textsuperscript{80}

After von Beijer’s death, the organization of the postal administration changed. Until this point, the postmaster at the office in Stockholm had in prac-

\textsuperscript{74} Elgenstierna 1925–1936, i. p. 263.
\textsuperscript{75} Stadin 2004, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{76} Bladh 1999, pp. 50–52.
\textsuperscript{77} Forssell 1936, i. p. 52.
\textsuperscript{78} The contract with von Beijer is found in the registry of the government, Cantzlie Collegij Contract med Post Directoren Johan Beyer, 20 December 1662, RR, RA.
\textsuperscript{79} Olsson 2006, pp. 7–22.
\textsuperscript{80} His widow, Margareta von Beijer, then managed practical operations at the office in Stockholm for a couple of years, but she never exercised any real power over the postal organization of the realm, as Gese Wechel had done.
tice also been the postmaster general, even if not expressly stated as such in the rules and regulations. However, after von Beijer’s death the chancellor Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie was granted the Post Office as a personal fief in 1673. According to a royal letter of 10 June 1673, the chancellor had been entrusted with the post

entirely to dispose, arrange, and order as you find most suitable to our [king] and the Crown’s service, respect, and use. […] Whatevsoever the excess [money] may be, we leave you free discretion to order after your own pleasure. 81

Compared with von Beijer’s lease, and Taube’s fief in the 1650s, this enfeoffment gave Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie far more sweeping powers, so he could essentially run the Post Office as he saw fit. 82 Its most important feature was that De la Gardie secured the surplus from the postage rates. This money was no longer to be delivered to the Crown, but could be used by the chancellor, as he wanted.

The period of Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie’s fief of the Swedish Post Office has not yet been thoroughly investigated by historians. De la Gardie has often been singled out as the scapegoat for the economic troubles in the 1670s; whether this is accurate when it came the Post Office is still unclear. The general assumption is that his period in office saw the Post Office descend into confusion, mostly because he drained money from the postal treasury. An alternative explanation might be that the Crown, in the shape of Charles XI, did not stay out of postal matters. On several occasions the king interfered in its administration, undermining De la Gardie’s authority. However, the chancellor held on to his post until 1677. In that year the fief was abolished and the Post Office once again came under the management of the Chancery Board.

As chancellor, Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie was the head of Charles XI’s regency government and one of the most influential nobles of the seventeenth century. He gained the young king’s confidence, and the fief of the Post Office was given to him in the year after the king ascended the throne aged seventeen. Apparently, De la Gardie was granted the post as a reward for his services to the Crown. However, the chancellor fell into disgrace in the later 1670s, and there is reason to believe that his removal from the Post Office was due to the power struggle during the Scanian War (1675–1679). 83 After his accession, Charles XI set up a land inquisition, aimed at the members of the regency government. This was followed in the 1680s by demands heard from the peasantry and the lesser nobility for the restitution to the Crown of alienated estates held by the aristocracy. De la Gardie was one of the noblemen most affected by this policy, as

81 Letter of enfeoffment to Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie, 10 June 1673, RR, RA.
82 Holm 1906–1929, iii. p. 83.
83 Wittrock 1931, pp. 671–672.
most of his estates were taken by the Crown.84 The more aggressive policy on the king’s part can be explained as a result of the Scanian War and the increasingly pressing need for resources. The confused financial policies and lack of ready cash were blamed on the regency government. The final outcome of this struggle between the leading aristocracy and the king was the introduction of absolutism in 1680.85 This done, the Crown strengthened its power over the Post Office, as over other parts of the state administration. After the introduction of absolutism, the postal organization was integrated more closely into the state administration, and the groundwork for a civil service department was laid.86

The enfeoffment to Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie represents the last of the serious attempts to organize the Swedish Post Office by leases and fiefs. The arrangement with De la Gardie was the end of an era, sometimes described as a ‘personal regime’, because of the dependence on the individuals assigned to lead the Post Office.

The making of a civil service department
The merger of the postal organization with the public administration began in the early 1680s. The newly ennobled Samuel Åkerhielm was appointed secretary in the Chancery Board, with responsibility for postal questions. Åkerhielm’s is a typical example of an official government career in the Swedish realm at this point. He came from a clerical family, and had studied at the universities in Uppsala and in Leiden, the Dutch Republic.87

Together with the chief accountant of the Post Office, Lars Skragge, Åkerhielm supervised the Post Office from his position in the Chancery Board. At their side they had Johan Gustav von Beijer, the son of the former postmaster Johan von Beijer, who was postmaster at the Post Office in Stockholm. The younger von Beijer’s standing in the Post Office is a matter of some confusion. He was called ‘post director’ in some ordinances, but in the formal regulations he was only given the title ‘postmaster in Stockholm’. Whatever his title, he certainly played a role, not yet analyzed by historians, in the postal administration. He seems to have received his position as a reward for his father’s work, and in 1697 he was discharged from the Post Office. In one way, von Beijer was a remnant of the older organizational form of the Post Office in the era of ‘personal regime’.

The management in the 1680s was insufficient to the task, mainly because of the Board’s increasing work load. There were calls for a more efficient postal administration, and the question came to the fore when financial responsibility

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84 Wittrock 1931, p. 673.
87 Forssell 1936, i. pp. 61–62.
for the Post Office was moved to the Chancery Board from the Exchequer Board in 1685.88 Charles XI decided that the Board was to be responsible for the post’s finances, and granted it the right to control both the post’s surplus and its costs. This was a solution that set the postal organization apart from the rest of the state administration. Usually, the surplus of any Crown enterprise in the seventeenth century was meant to be transferred to the Exchequer Board and used for Crown expenses, normally the costs of the military and war. However, thanks to Charles XI’s decision in 1685, the Post Office was given control of its own finances.89

The change in 1685 led to even more work on postal questions in the Chancery Board. Apparently, the Board handled post business unfairly, and in the 1690s voices were again heard demanding a reorganization of the postal leadership. That was done in 1697, when Åkerhielm was appointed director general of the Swedish Post Office.90 His instructions confirm that the director general was to have executive power over the Post Office – and in so doing, the foundations for a freestanding civil service department were laid. Åkerhielm’s rise to director general of the Post Office has in part to do with Charles XII’s accession to the throne in 1697. Silent opposition to his father’s appointments marked the first years of his reign, and Åkerhielm’s promotion should be seen in that light. In conjunction with the appointment a couple of postal ordinances and regulations were issued: instructions for the chief accountant of the Post Office; and regulations for postmasters and postal personnel.

All in all, the most important change in the reorganization of the 1690s was undoubtedly the introduction of the office of director general. The office was equipped with more authority than any previous postal administrator.

Whatever in the direction of the Post Office is to be decided by the Chancery Board, it shall be conducted and executed by him [the director general], under the supervision of the Board. […] Under the director general stands the whole of his Royal Majesty’s Post Office in Sweden and Finland, with Estonia, Livonia and Ingria, and likewise in his Royal Majesty’s German provinces.91

The leadership of the post was given to one man, who was granted executive powers over the entire organization. The right to employ postmasters and post-farmers was transferred from the Chancery Board to the director general, except for some of the postmasters in the larger towns that would henceforth be appoin-

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88 In Swedish Statskontoret, established in 1680 and still operating under the same name today (although now translated as the ‘Swedish Agency for Public Management’, a far cry from the 1680s, when its main task was to make suggestions for the Crown’s budget).
89 Forssell 1936, i. pp. 74–80, provides a useful account of the changes in 1685.
90 Royal letter, 23 August 1697, RR, RA.
91 Instruction for the director general of the Post Office, 19 August 1704 [reissue], Styffe 1856, pp. 479–480, quotation from paragraphs I and III.
ted by the Board. Likewise, the director general was allowed to commission inspections of the local post offices. He had to answer to the Chancery Board, although he shared his authority with the Board and was empowered to make changes to the postal organization, as is evinced by the fact that his circulars, containing new regulations, were as binding as the royal ordinances and the resolutions of the Chancery Board.92 Besides the director general, the work of the chief accountant of the Post Office was regulated in a set of instructions from 1704. The accountant was supposed to work together with the director general, and his main task was to manage the surplus in the postal treasury and to deposit the money in the Riksbank, the central bank.93

It was not only the executives in the postal organization who were established and regulated; further measures were taken in the early eighteenth century to increase the control of the postal personnel. This stemmed from the fact that as a growing organization it had to be supervised more closely if it was to work properly. Greater control was intended to enforce delivery times and Post Office regulations, primarily by decentralizing its work. In one sense this was a return to the organization of the 1640s, when the local post offices had had a dominant position within the Post Office. In 1643 the postmasters had been given the task of supervising the post-farmers, and for the remainder of the century this control function was implemented with increasing effect. In the 1710s the solution was standardized, and the postmasters in towns where the county governors had their seats were given a supervisory role as postal inspectors. They had to run all the postmasters and post-farmers in their particular county, and where there were problems report to the central administration.94

The organizational development of the Post Office after 1680 clearly shows its development into a form of a civil service department, at least of a rudimentary kind. The organization of the 1650s and 1660s had been one of fiefs and personal connections. When it came to its formal organization, the ensuing period of royal absolutism established the Post Office as a part of the larger Swedish state administration. The post gained control over its own finances, and developed rules and regulations from within the organization; a process that continued into the eighteenth century. The changes to the Post Office should be viewed in a broader context, where other parts of the state administration were controlled more directly by the Crown. In the 1680s and the following decades, this was largely determined by the introduction of absolutism in the reign of Charles XI. This change, tied to the increasing powers of the king, is especially characteristic of economic and organizational policy. The strategy adopted by the Swedish Crown was primarily intended to finance its endless wars. The economy was put

93 Forssell 1936, i. p. 69.
94 Forssell 1936, i. pp. 70–72.
under state control following cameralistic principles, and radical changes were implemented that saw greater control of exports and prices.  

It should be emphasized that the strengthening of royal power by Charles XI was introduced in opposition to the old aristocracy, who demanded to share power with the king. During the Scanian War the power struggle between the Council and the king resulted in the defeat of the high nobility. The cadres of newly ennobled state officials supported the king. Unlike the old aristocracy, these men depended on their salaries from the Crown, and a consolidation of state administration, combined with an attack on the wealth of the aristocrats, would increase their likelihood of getting paid.

A proof of the solidity of the postal organization that emerged from this process is the fact that the rules and regulations that were introduced at the turn of the eighteenth century regulated the Post Office more-or-less unchanged until the 1860s. Only then, as the ‘modern’ era loomed, was the organization changed.

A failed attempt to introduce a completely new postal system has to be mentioned, though. In 1718, Charles XII ordered the fusion of the Post Office with the innkeepers. One of the ideas of the ordinance was that throughout the realm mail should be transported by stagecoach together with paying passengers. Compared with the postal service that had been started in 1636, the method of transporting the mail specified in this ordinance was wholly new, for it partially excluded the post-farmers. The ordinance was never fully implemented. When Charles XII was killed on campaign in Norway on 30 November 1718, the ordinance was rescinded and the previous organization of the Post Office reinstated.

Closing remarks

Clearly there were close links between the Swedish state administration and the establishment of the Post Office. In the Swedish case, the postal service was initiated to meet the communication needs of the Crown. To this extent the foundation of the Swedish post was distinct from that in other European states, where commercial and mercantile interests played a much more significant role in starting postal services. A parallel has been drawn with Denmark and Hamburg, where the merchants were put in charge of the postal organization. What might explain this? Were there any differences in Swedish society that might account for the particular organization of the postal service? One possible explanation is the lack of Swedish urbanization. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, towns in Sweden were few and tiny, and the number of merchants likely

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95 See Dahlgren 1993, pp. 113–132.
97 Forssell 1936, i. p. 63; for the instructions, see Styffe 1856, pp. 479–524.
99 For the ordinance of 1718, see Forssell 1936, i. pp. 146–154.
to be in regular need of a postal service was comparatively small. It was chiefly the Crown that needed and sought new means for regular communication, because of its engagement in European politics. This fact alone set the Swedish Post Office apart.

The second thing to highlight is the role of the post-farmer. With exception of Norway, the use of post-farmers to transport the mail stands out as a distinctive feature of the Swedish post. In its founding ordinance of 1636, the post-farmers were incorporated in the postal service and given a huge responsibility for transporting the mail. One might argue that this was a typical way for the Swedish Crown to solve its need for manpower. Nonetheless, the administration must have trusted the farmers to handle the mail.

A possible explanation might be the degree to which the Swedish peasantry was integrated in the rule of the kingdom. The peasantry had their own parliamentary estate, and the custom of submitting appeals to the Diet separates Sweden from its neighbours, where the peasantry did not have the same opportunities to take part in the rule of their realms. While this should not be taken as a sign of full, modern democracy, it may go some way towards explaining the more widespread trust in the Swedish peasantry. It should also be borne in mind that the Swedish army was largely composed of conscripts drawn from farm villages, in a further instance of the state’s dependence on good relations with the peasantry. Yet not only was it a matter of trust; another telling reason was the financial incentive for the Crown. The Swedish treasury was painfully empty of ready cash in the seventeenth century. A postal system based on post-farmers attracted by the lure of tax exemptions may have been the only postal system the Crown could afford.

One of Gustaf Adolf von der Osten genannt Sacken’s first experiences after his appointment as governor of the Baltic island of Gotland in 1689 was of the frustratingly poor state of communication with the mainland. A royal proclamation of mourning for the late ex-Queen Christina dated Stockholm 1 May reached the governor only on 19 May. The governor’s report of his first impressions of Gotland, dated 16 May, had still not left Visby harbour when he wrote his second letter on 22 May. The unreliability and inadequacies of the packet-boats were beyond description, von der Osten complained. His proposed solution was the purchase of a post-yacht for faster and more reliable communication; with it, the governor would be able to pursue the king’s orders more promptly.¹

Von der Osten’s experience is at odds with the common view on early modern Europe communications that the most efficient transportation was waterborne, and that an island should therefore have been rather well set. Ships went faster and could carry a great deal more cargo.² In his book on transport and trade from 1431 onwards, the geographer Peter Hugill uses the three stages of ‘technological regimes’, originally developed by Lewis Mumford: the eotechnic, the paleotechnic, and the neotechnic. Hugill characterizes the eotechnic phase (from the Greek eos, dawn, and techne, craft) as a period of dynamism for sea-borne communication by wind-powered, ocean-going ships, whereas land transport continued to be dominated by an older regime based on the use of draught animals and human muscles with limited capacities. According to Hugill, the eotechnic phase lasted from the first Portuguese ocean-going journeys in the 1430s to the invention of steam-powered railway engines and marine engines, and the electric telegraph system for communicating information, four centuries later.³

¹ Skrivelser till Kungl Maj:t, Landshövdingars skrivelser I: Sverige, Gotlands län, vol. 1, 1650-1693, RA, Governor Gustav Adolf von der Osten genannt Sacken to his Majesty, Visby, 22 May 1689, RA. Postjakt (Swedish) or Postjacht (Dutch), a small fast ship used for post conveyance over open sea.
² Hugill 1993, pp. 48–50; Volckart 2007, p. 54.
³ Hugill 1993, pp. 6–7.
Improvements in road standards in the second half of the eighteenth century were merely improvements on the eotechnic transport system. All great economies were sea-centred – the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, the North Sea, the Atlantic, and the Baltic. Trading ports had their dependent hinterlands, but the trading networks fanned out across the oceans. The economic historian Hans Westlund has described Sweden’s era as a great power in the seventeenth century as first and foremost a maritime empire, where the sea connected the realm and land was a barrier. One important reason was that transaction costs for sea-borne transport were much lower than for overland transport.

In the Middle Ages, Gotland was one of the most central places for trade in the Baltic region. This position was long gone by the seventeenth century, but trade was still important for the island’s inhabitants – and not only for the merchants in Visby, but for the farmers in the countryside as well. Gotland maintained its old Baltic network, and traded in tar, timber, and limestone. In 1640, 345 laden ships departed Gotland, of which three-quarters sailed from small harbours. Exports appeared to have increased by the end of the seventeenth century. By way of comparison, only 175 ships departed from Stockholm harbour in 1643. With c. 2,400 inhabitants in 1690, Visby was a small town by European standards, but was one of the ten largest towns in Sweden. Gotland was not remote and isolated. It was deeply involved in the commercial relationships of the Baltic region.

Nevertheless, von der Osten’s first impressions of the state of communication were merely confirmed by his later experiences. On 6 March 1691, the governor reported that it was only the day before that he had received the bönedagsplakat, the annual intercession day proclamation, dated Stockholm 28 January. This was the first mail delivery since eight days before Christmas, and von der Osten also reports a tragedy. The wreckage of the packet-boat from the island of Öland had been found on the shores of Gotland in January, with no survivors. Ten passengers and all the farmers on the boat had perished. This was not a unique event – similar accidents took place in 1698 with a total of thirteen casualties – while interruptions lasting for weeks were not uncommon, as the farmers waited for fair winds.

These delays and interruptions were a natural part of cargo transport in the Baltic, which was seasonal and ceased completely in winter-time. But it was a

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4 Hugill 1993, pp. 159–166.
5 Westlund 1998, p. 43.
7 Gardell 1986, pp. 29–38, 47.
8 Bogucka 2003 (1980), p. 110, Table II.
9 Lilja 2000, p. 405, Table 2.
poor standard for information transfer. In 1702, post on the Stockholm–Göteborg land route, which was twice the distance, took about four days, and the whole 'information circle' (the time taken from sending of message to receiving a reply) took about ten days. The post on this route also went regularly once a week. Anyone in the seventeenth century used to a steady flow of written information and being able to act on the basis of letters must have regarded Gotland to be in the middle of nowhere. It was also expensive to send letters from Gotland. On average, correspondents in Visby had to pay much more in postage than correspondents in Stockholm.

Themes and arguments
This study asks how quickly the Swedish Post Office delivered mail. Governor von der Osten’s annoyance at the slowness and insecurity of sea-mail points up a particular concern. Was it a general feature of postal deliveries that posts were carried more quickly and reliably overland? Surviving postpass ('hour passes') are the main source for a comparison between overland mail and sea-mail. If information travelled faster on land, why was that the case? What consequence did it have for the integration of societies and for the Swedish Empire in particular?

Communication bias
Philip II (1556–1598), the 'largest brain in the world', ruled his Spanish Empire by reading reports from his councils about information received and by writing orders. He often worked late into the night, trying to digest the incoming information and direct outgoing orders without losing any time. He possessed what was then Europe’s most efficient postal service, managed by the Thurn und Taxis family, and thus often had the pleasure of informing envoys from other states of events they knew nothing about. Still, Philip II was handicapped by the time-lag in information, and above all by the unpredictability of when it might arrive. Reports to Madrid from his troublesome provinces in the Netherlands normally took two weeks, but they sometimes took several months. An order issued on receipt of information could easily be redundant by the time it actually arrived. One of the reasons for the defeat of the Spanish Armada against England in 1588 was that Philip’s efforts to implement his strategy were thwarted by inadequate lines of communication to the commanders who were meant

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12 ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, Postpass, Postlederna till och från Stockholm, vol. E 3 H:1, 'Post af Stockholm til Götheborg' [31 January to 8 February 1702], RA.
13 Simonson 2009a, Map 1.
14 Discussed in detail below, p. 71-72.
to execute his orders. 18 The time-lag in the transfer of information limited a ruler's ability to direct events.

Receiving news via the Post Office was of great value to correspondents; the speed of transfer had an impact on their ability to act, react, or interact. For interaction, it is important to observe not only the time taken to travel from A to B, but the time taken for the round trip. This is what the Finnish historian Seija-Riita Laakso has labelled an information circle. 19 When studying the postal system, interactions, and thus information circles, are as important as the one-way communication embodied by mass media such as the press.

The significance of this goes far beyond a handful of individuals gaining the edge in commercial or political decisions; it had consequences for the organization of the decision-making bodies themselves. The time-lag problem forced the English Hudson Bay and East India Companies to delegate most of their decisions to the trading posts instead. 20 The sociologist Anthony Giddens has stressed the time–space constitution of societies, in that the power that integrates societies is mediated through time and space. He introduces the concept time–space distanciation of societies to express their ability to integrate. 21 Giddens draws inspiration from time-geography and the geographer Allan Pred's use of the concept time–space convergence in his study of urban systems in the US. Pred uses this concept to measure the shrinking of the time needed to travel between two points over a period of five decades, and goes on to argue for the profound significance of time–space convergence for the growth of the urban system. 22

The globalization of the last 150 years is an unprecedented example of societies' time–space distanciation and of time–space convergence, up to the point of creating a 'global village'. 23 It is a consequence of improved means of communication over distance in what has become a global, real-time information exchange. 24 Such a 'stretch' of societies in time and space requires certain skills or technologies. Giddens emphasizes the art of writing as one of the most important means. The written word dramatically improved people's capacity to store information, and thus improved the ability of societies to reproduce over time. 25 It also improved the geographical exchange of information. It is here postal systems come in. In early modern Europe, the development of the postal system was an important element in the integration of Europe. Herbert Samuel (British Postmaster General 1910–1916) summarizes the impact of the postal

22 Pred 1973, pp. 175–185, 217.
system on integration in his introduction to A. D. Smith’s research on postage, published during the First World War:

The whole of our social organization has come to depend in large degree upon the post. Commerce, in all its departments, relies upon it. All the variety of associations which are, in their wide expansion, distinctive of modern civilization and necessary to its life and energy – employers’ associations, trade unions, cooperative societies, friendly societies, religious bodies, political and propagandist organization of every kind, local, national and international – the whole nervous system of the modern State, depend upon the quick transmission of information and ideas; it would never have reached and could not maintain its present development without cheap, reliable, and speedy means of communication. The indirect effect of changes – even small changes – in the postal system is often extensive and almost incalculable.26

This was the European social organization that had begun to take shape in the seventeenth century. Postal systems were not a novelty, but they had developed considerably since the end of the fifteenth century, emerging as new, institutional outfits that amounted to a truly transnational European infrastructure, supervised by the European states and protected by state privileges – but also open to public use. The German historian Wolfgang Behringer regards early modern postal infrastructure as the centrepiece of a European communications revolution, comprising as it did the distribution of printed newspapers, the organization of travel, and the creation of a public sphere in coffee-houses and similar places. Eventually, the postal system laid the foundation for institutions and a communication network that used technological innovations in a second and more powerful communications revolution from the 1830s on – from railways and telegraphs to the Internet.27

In a lecture series published in 1950, the Canadian economic historian Harold Innis unfolded a theoretical approach that connected the concepts of time, space, media techniques, and power structures – or ‘empires’ in Innis’s terminology. Innis reflected upon ‘heavy’ and durable materials for storing written information such as parchment, stone, and clay, which favoured decentralization and hierarchical institutions, usually supported by an ideological (for which read religious) power. ‘Light’ and less durable materials such as paper and papyrus, on the other hand, favoured trade and administration over wide areas.28 From this observation, Innis used the concept of empire as an indication of the efficiency of communication.29 The concept is synonymous with a system of social power, mediated in time–space. Innis’s observation on light and heavy media

27 Behringer 2003, p. 42.
pinpoints two important features of written information and its integrative aspects: information flows in space and information storage over time. He argues that the shift from parchment to paper and the printing press in late medieval Europe entailed a shift from a decentralized religious and monastic ‘empire’, with its bias towards integration over time, to a power structure based on trade and monarchical power, and with a bias towards integration over space.  

Like many others, not least his adherent Marshall McLuhan (author of *The Gutenberg Galaxy*), Innis stressed the impact of the printing revolution in transforming the media system in early modern Europe. Behringer argues against this view, claiming that it was the postal system that provided communications proper, while the printing press was merely a device for copying and storing information. Although Behringer in turn tends to downplay the importance of the printing press too much, his view points to an important modification of Innis’s interpretation of communication bias in early modern Europe. Printing has an ambiguous part to play when it comes to integration over time or space. As a technique it was of profound importance for the spread of information, which would promote spatial extension; yet the printing of texts was also a means of conserving the message over time, especially when it was considered holy – such as the Bible. More than the printing press, the postal service was a ‘light’ medium for communication over distance, and lent its weight to commercial and bureaucratic geographical integration. Rather than durability, postal systems were concerned with speed in order to overcome distance.

**Speed and synchronization**

The German historian Gerhard Dohrn-van Rossum argues that the late medieval and early modern postal system contributed in two important ways to the development of modern ‘temporal orders’; in trying to transfer letters as fast as possible it contributed to the fixation on speed; and in its pursuit of co-ordinating the postal network by using fixed delivery times it contributed to synchronization.

Distances could be overcome by speed, and this became the *raison d’être* for the postal system. It achieved speed by using relays, or *posts* in the original sense, where the horse or both horse and rider could be changed: the high speed over a short distance that a single rider could achieve thus became the ideal average speed for a series of riders over a long distance. The corollary was that the fastest possible speeds were only open to organizations that maintained the necessary relay infrastructure and supervision.

31 Behringer 2003, p. 15.
32 Simonson 2008a, pp. 254–255, 257–258 elaborates on this borrowing from Innis.
According to Dohrn-van Rossum, the urge to co-ordinate routes came later than the quest for fast communication. He uses the example of the imperial Post Office in the Holy Roman Empire – the Thurn und Taxis postal service – in the 1590s, the period when it was reformed. The Post Office at that point was supposed to be financed by postage for private letters, and the merchants in consequence became an extremely important interest group. They wanted a reliable system. The postal system was duly restructured with numerous agreements within the imperial Post Office and between Post Offices about fixed delivery times to orchestrate post routes.35

Fixed timetables were important for administering a complex network of post routes in order to optimize time efficiency, but they also point more directly at the relationship between the postal system and its customers in the shape of publicly announced time-limits for the dispatch of letters and expected arrival of posts. Wolfgang Behringer shows that expectations of ordinary post-days had an impact on the weekly rhythm of life as early as the middle of the sixteenth century.36 Correspondents had an interest in predicting the times of post’s departure and arrival.

In abstract terms, timetables aim to synchronize otherwise unrelated movements in space and time in order to effect complex social interactions. They are needed on occasions when people who interact are in different places and do not have direct access to one another; they are a means of mediating social relationships over large distances. The use of timetables for synchronization is typically connected with the shared use of communication systems, such as buses, railways, and aeroplanes. Paths and nodes in a network are not fixed without the existence of a timetable. As the postal network grew in complexity, with more junctions connecting different post routes, synchronization became even more important for a variety of reasons – including speed.

The mediation of ideological, commercial, and bureaucratic power
It is no coincidence that it was the new governor of Gotland who was frustrated at the poor state of the postal deliveries, nor that this was in 1689, when Gotland ceased to be part of the late Queen Christina’s endowment and began to be integrated into the bureaucratic Swedish state. Why so, when Gotland’s trade continued to prosper, and its merchants seem not to have expressed any frustration over the state of communications?

The exchange of written information is a cornerstone of administrative power, especially in bureaucracies. The mediation of power over distance in a bureaucratic system builds on the accepted right for an absent superior to give orders in writing to his subordinates, who duly administer resources on the spot.

When it came to decision-making, the central administration depends on a constant flow of information from within the country’s borders and from abroad, and it has to be up-to-date information for decisions to make any sense. Bureaucratic power necessitates the centralization of authority and the fast and reliable transmission of information. It was in this manner Philip II ruled his empire. The Swedish historian Lennart Lundmark has also stressed the need to synchronize the flow of information within bureaucratic systems.37

The idea with commerce was to transfer commodities, while information was only a means to this end. However, the importance of business information to trade has attracted greater attention in economic history with the growing interest in transaction costs, and among them information costs. Without business information, long-distance trade could not be profitable. Improving postal networks in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries allowed for a change in business patterns from the travelling merchant to commission trade, in which the merchant did business by corresponding with his commissaries in various locations.38 This development lowered the transaction costs considerably and was thus important for the economic dynamic in early modern trade. The merchant had the same interest in the fast transmission of news as the politician, and for much the same reason: in order to react to actual circumstances and to gain the edge in a competitive environment. Nevertheless, trade could not rely solely on information transfer. Instead, commercial power built on a combination of the ability to transfer information and the ability to transport commodities.

A third ground for power, ideological power, worked in a more diffuse way, and was less dependent on the speedy transfer of information. Innis connects ideological power with durability rather than geographical reach. This does not mean that ideological power never operated through the postal organization. The regrets the governor had about the delayed arrival of the intercession day proclamation on Gotland serve as an example of how the postal service also spread ideological messages.39 In his work on imagined communities, Benedict Anderson emphasizes the importance of a constant flow of news about events in the construction of national sentiment.40 Still, ideological power, and especially religious power, was based on the world-views and shared practices embedded in local societies to which news flows were merely a supplement. Ideological power was less dependent on the quick delivery of news.

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37 Lundmark 1989, pp. 144–146.
39 Malmstedt 1994, p. 106, underlines that the prescribed themes for prayer served to foster national sentiment.
Integrative power in the Swedish Empire

Early modern Europe saw a state-building process by which political power was centralized in what has been variously labelled the absolutist state, the power state (*Machtstaat*), the military state, or the fiscal–military state. In the seventeenth century, Sweden developed into one of Europe’s most formidable fiscal–military states, which managed to exploit the fiscal and military resources of a poor country, with a small and scattered population, on a scale that, apart from its hostile neighbour Denmark, would hardly be matched by any state before the French Revolution.41 One explanation is that the Swedish state managed this because of its superior organization, its ideological mobilization under the banner of the Lutheran faith, and a political culture that involved the common people in administration and policy-making.42 The state extended its power and knowledge into the individual peasants’ families, thanks largely to the use the state could make of the parish clergy. The nobility became involved in state service and was generally loyal to the growth of the administrative power of the state. The central and regional bureaucracy was built up systematically.43 On the local level, as pointed out by the historian Eva Österberg, state administration was integrated into the organs of municipal and parochial self-government and the local judiciary, which resulted in a political culture of mutuality and participation.44 Sweden was a much-governed and integrated state.

In contrast to this description of the Swedish state, the British historian Michael Roberts concludes that the Swedish Empire was not particularly unified. It was a conglomerate of different provinces that had little in common other than a common Lutheran faith (and even so there was the exception of the Russian Orthodox population of Ingria, who were looked on with suspicion). The commercial links between different parts of the empire were weak. Constitutionally, the relationship between the Swedish kings and their subjects varied greatly between different parts of the empire.45 The result was an entity that has recently been labelled a conglomerate state.46 Nilsson’s much-governed state and Roberts’s weakly integrated empire describe different geographic ranges. While Roberts describes the Swedish Baltic Empire, centred on the Baltic, Nilsson describes a state-building process that only comprised the Swedish kingdom (Sweden and Finland). Present-day political divisions and language barriers have also led Swedish historians to overlook much of the Finnish realm, thus creating an even stronger image of a strong and integrated Swedish state.

41 Lindegren 2000, p. 197.
44 Österberg 1991, pp. 177–188.
Roberts’s observation that the commercial links between the different parts of the empire were weak also meant that Sweden was not, in the words of Charles Tilly, a capital intensive power (an organized power that made use of accumulated capital and commerce), but a coercive intensive power. The Finnish historian Matti Klinge has described sea-centred empires as founded on trade and ‘politics’, as in the Greek city-states; and continental empires as founded on agriculture, and on ideological and administrative structures, as was the Carolingian Empire. He describes both the Danish and the Swedish kingdoms as maritime empires, although he also observes that Sweden was not a commercial empire, but depended more on territorial military and administrative power, like the Roman Empire. In the eighteenth century, Klinge continues, the dominant position in the Baltic passed from Sweden to the continental powers of Russia and Prussia. As already noted, Hans Westlund holds Sweden to have been a maritime empire, but one whose nucleus was the territorial infrastructure the Swedish state had gradually built up in the preceding centuries. After its decline in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the territory, with its land-based infrastructure first built up in the medieval age, remained. What may seem paradoxical is that Sweden’s commercial power was growing in the eighteenth century, at the same time as its maritime empire was crumbling, according to Tilly. I will return to this riddle of strong state and weak empire in the conclusion, for I consider the postal system to be part of the explanation, being a weak point for the integration of the empire and ultimately the defence of the empire. As Philip II found in Spain, the Swedish Empire suffered from the time-lag in its communications.

Time-keeping versus news

Teodor Holm has considered in detail a conflict between two officials at the General Post Office in Stockholm in the autumn of 1710 that highlights the conflicting principles of speed and punctuality that were inherent in the Post Office’s work. Stockholm was then in the grip of plague, and the court had fled to the safer town of Arboga two hundred kilometres to the west. The director general of the Post Office, Johan Schmedeman, had followed the court, leaving Johan Lange, the book-keeper and supervisor, in charge in Stockholm. Unfortunately, Schmedeman clearly failed to inform Stockholm’s postmaster Daniel von Möller about the arrangement. This escalated an already well-entrenched personal conflict up the point where the two men each claimed that they feared for

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49 Klinge 1985, p. 182.
50 Westlund 1998, p. 43.
their lives. One reason for the conflict was their different opinions about time-management. On one occasion, von Möller wrote to Schmedeman that:

[Johan Lange’s] threats will not frighten me from proceeding with the dispatch of the posts at the appropriate times, not waiting on his delayed news sheets. If he then wants to break open sealed packages and posts, then there certainly will be a fight.

von Möller thought that holding to the timetable for the dispatch of the post was a priority and that, as postmaster, it was his responsibility to ensure this. He believed his efforts were being frustrated by Lange’s actions. Not only did Lange himself delay the departure of the post because he was habitually behind schedule with his newsletters, he also undermined von Möller’s authority with the Post Office clerks who were meant to have the mail ready for dispatch. Lange disregarded von Möller’s precedence. A postmaster, Lange retorted, had to know how to speed up the post when it had been detained. All the occasions when the news sheets had delayed the dispatch of the post were justified, Lange claimed. He defended his authority to break ‘prematurely’ sealed mailbags, whenever deemed necessary.

Lange had put his point of view in a memorandum back in 1703, in which he discussed how to inculcate respect for dispatch times with the same fervour as von Möller. Yet he drew a distinction between ordinary public correspondents and more important correspondents: the government and ‘those one has to respect’. In the autumn of 1710, probably nothing appeared to Lange to be more important for the welfare of the state than the time-consuming task of serving the absent court with news. His method, the one that so annoyed von Möller, was to start working intensively on the news sheets as late as possible in order to include the very latest news.

The conflict between von Möller and Lange illustrates a central ambiguity in the whole Swedish postal system – one that also affected its time management. Was it a public service institution that existed to serve the diffuse group of merchants and other private customers who financed the system? Or was it a state post that served a hierarchic bureaucracy, in which someone had the power...

52 Three chapters in Holm’s work are dedicated to this conflict (Holm 1906–1929, v. pt. 2, pp. 76–164).
57 von Möller complained that the clerks started work several hours late in the evenings, and were still working on the news when it was time to prepare the post for departure (Holm 1906–1929, v. pt. 2, p. 105).
to decide which messages and which users were allowed to disrupt its routines, deeming the welfare of the state to be its prime objective? von Möller was a proponent of the Post Office as public service institution, where all customers had to submit to its routines to make the system as a whole work smoothly. It boiled down to co-ordination. He was not prepared to let any one user disturb the entire system, whatever their rank or purpose, nor was there any excuse for those actually working in the organization. Lange, on the other hand, saw the schedules as applying only to the public customers of the Post Office.58 When handling important official correspondence, the staff had to stay alert whatever the hour, and do what it took to ensure its quick dispatch.59 The prime function of the Post Office was as a state post, with a side-line offering a paid service to the public.

Circumstances in 1710 brought this tension to a head. Usually the court was in Stockholm, Sweden’s commercial centre and the hub of the postal network as well. The work compiling news for the court did not normally impinge on the routines for the dispatch of the west-going post to Arboga. But in 1710 it did. This was one of Sweden’s most critical moments. The vicissitudes of the Great Northern War produced a great deal of news, little of it good – not to mention the menace of the plague.

Imposing time discipline on state officials

In 1710, the director general of the Post Office, Johan Schmedeman, first supported Johan Lange in the conflict, probably in deference to Lange’s seniority and because of his personal trust in Lange.60 The general tenor of the rules that governed the Post Office, however, was that people outside the postal system had to respect its schedules, regardless of their position in society. Back in 1667, Charles XI’s regents had issued an ordinance forbidding postmasters to delay the post after the prescribed time of departure, whether it be on their own initiative or at the request of someone else, and whatever the pretext. Although the ordinance threatened the postmasters with punishment, its main effect was to protect their professional integrity from pressure from their ‘customers’ (and thus the ordinance also defined the relationship as that of postmaster and customer, or even client, and not as servant and superior). The ordinance also stressed the customers’ obligation to respect the prescribed times of departure. A late letter had to wait for the next post, and not even the argument that the letter contained important news for the king would do. In urgent cases, the ordinance instead

58 Johan Lange’s memorandum criticized the failure to fine merchants who delayed the post (Holm 1906–1929, v. pt. 2, pp. 102–103).
recommends the use of couriers rather than detaining a large number of other important letters.\textsuperscript{61}

The prohibition was repeated in 1682, probably reflecting the problems in enforcing it.\textsuperscript{62} In 1683, the prohibition was repeated once again, this time when the postmasters’ and post-farmers’ independence of provincial governors, bailiffs, and constables was asserted.\textsuperscript{63} A similar instruction in 1690 concerned the post-yacht on the new route Ystad–Stralsund, and prohibited all, save the king himself, from detaining the yachts after the post was loaded, or from commanding its departure before the post had arrived.\textsuperscript{64} (Since the post-yacht also carried passengers, there might in fact be some interest in persuading the yacht to depart prematurely.) In 1685, the king also prohibited the use of the post-farmers’ horses for extraordinary posts or courier traffic since this risked exhausting them, to the detriment of the ordinary post. In urgent matters, correspondents were instructed to send couriers instead and use innkeepers’ horses.\textsuperscript{65} Two years earlier, the king had intervened to prevent private letters being sent by extraordinary post, ordering the postmasters to let those letters wait until the ordinary post.\textsuperscript{66}

It must have been tempting for regional state officials to use their power to force the postal system to suit their own time schedule. Provincial governors could both claim general social superiority and the priority of the state interests that they administered. In such a hierarchical society, prominent people could use their social superiority. This was the view that the ordinance of 1667 and the king’s commands of the 1680s set out to challenge. There was no room for individual officials to give reign to their belief that their own correspondence was of greater importance. This would be an abuse of the postal system that would surely result in the delay of even more important correspondence – official as


\textsuperscript{65} Transsumpt af Kongl. May:tz nådige Resolution och Förklaring / uppå någre af thess Cantzlie-Collegio i underdånighet föredragne ährender / Postväsendet angående / Gifwen Stockholm then 17 Martij 1685, § 11, published in Kongelige och andra wederbörandes förordningar angående postväsendet 1707, p. 8.

well as private, as the ordinance proclaimed in 1683. Here, the king expressed a view of the postal service as a public service institution, in which public use was not only a means of financing the postal system, but an important factor in the prosperity of the realm. It was also part of the attempt to impose time discipline on the bureaucracy; officials ought to adhere to the time schedule, and adjust the time needed to solve their individual tasks accordingly.

A survey of the correspondence between the director general of the Post Office and the governors of the province of Uppland in 1712–1716 (province of Uppsala from 1714 onwards) shows that governors Johan Hoghusen (1695–1714) and Per Ribbing (1714–1719) generally respected the Post Office’s independence from provincial governance. They had serious complaints about some of the postmasters in the province, however, which they addressed to the director general of the Post Office. Some of the remarks concerned the postmasters’ time management. Hoghusen was very upset by the refusal of the postmasters in Tierp and Uppsala to carry an urgent extraordinary post in 1714, probably reporting enemy troop movements in the north. Hoghusen had been reduced to using his own couriers to carry the letter to Stockholm. In 1716, Ribbing, his successor as governor, urged the director general to command the postmaster in Uppsala to change times for the departure of the post for Enköping. The postmaster in Uppsala demanded that post for Enköping be delivered on Monday evening for dispatch on Tuesday at noon, but because the post from Stockholm only arrived on Tuesdays at about noon (a definite falling off, the governor remarked), the governor had no time to expedite orders to Enköping in response to letters from Stockholm. Ribbing wanted the dispatch of the post for Enköping to be on Tuesday evening instead. Governors were not only interested in fast deliveries but in co-ordination as well. In both these cases, the governors underlined the interests of the state, as was acknowledged by successive directors general of the Post Office.

To conclude, the need for co-ordination and punctuality if the postal system was to work, and the attendant need for immunity from external pressure for the Post Office staff, were acknowledged by the government and the directors of the Post Office in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. But the Post Office was not an independent, public service institution. The welfare of the state sometimes took priority, although various ordinances tried to lessen the poten-

69 Simonson 2008b, p. 15; Simonson 2010, p. 119–120.
70 ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, Skrivelser från landshövdingar med flera, Uppsala län 1701 – 1792, vol E 2 B:12, Governor Johan Hoghusen to General Post Director Samuel Barck, Uppsala, 27 September 1714, RA.
71 ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, Skrivelser från landshövdingar med flera, Uppsala län 1701–1792, vol E 2 B:15, Governor Ribbing to General Post Director, Uppsala, April 1716, RA.
tial conflict of interests by directing particularly urgent matters to extraordinary posts or to couriers outside the postal system. This hierarchy placed the communication to and from the Post Office in Stockholm as the primary objective, to which other post offices in the network had to yield, just as the postmaster in Uppsala had to adjust his timetable for the Uppsala–Enköping route to the arrival of the post from Stockholm.

A new kind of time-consciousness

And as soon he [the next postrider] hears the arrival of the post blown on the post-horn, [he] prepares himself to receive the letters from him, and with that, without hesitation, night and day, whatever the weather conditions, [he] speeds on his way.\textsuperscript{72}

The importance of swiftness permeates the ordinance of 1636 that marked the birth of the Swedish Post Office. The post-farmers and postriders were not meant to take more than two hours to cover one Swedish mile (§ 2 in the ordinance – a Swedish mile was just over 10 kilometres); they should use short cuts where possible (§§ 3 and 6); and they should not to stop to talk on the way (§ 8). On arrival, the postmasters in the towns had to dispatch the post within half an hour, before the next postrider departed (§ 17).

One principle of the postal system, vital both for speed and punctuality, was that the mail should get through irrespective of prevailing conditions. Natural obstacles that appeared along the road were not allowed to interfere with the rhythm of the deliveries. The postmaster and inspector in Nyköping, Leonhard Törnbohm, hurried to recommend some kind of penalty for the post-farmers responsible for a five-hour delay in 1705. Of course, he remarked, the night had been dark and wet, but the road had been hard and in good shape; the weather conditions were not a sufficient explanation.\textsuperscript{73} An ordinance of 1686 permitted a reduction in speed of no more than fifteen minutes per Swedish mile, from 1¼ hours to 1½, due to weather conditions.\textsuperscript{74} That the speed demanded was faster than that in 1636 was a consequence of the shift from running to mounted postriders, as prescribed as early as the 1640s and imposed in the following decades.

This ambition also supposed a corresponding professional ethos, a certain kind of heroism, which consisted of a stoic stubbornness to deliver the post without delay, even when this meant facing inconvenience and even serious danger. The postmistress in Luleå, Anna Gjärdsdotter, noted in 1686 how on

\textsuperscript{72} Förordning om postbåden 1636-02-20, § 1, quoted in Holm 1906–1929, p. 90.
\textsuperscript{73} Postverket centralarkivet, Teodor Holms excerptsamling, Avskrifter av handlingar som har anknytning till post från 1500- och fram t.o.m. 1800-talet, juli–dec 1705, sign. Ö 1 B:35, Postmaster Leonhard Törnbohm to General Post Director Schmedeman, 17 October 1705, RA.
\textsuperscript{74} Forssell 1936, p. 283.
numerous occasions she had taken great risks while crossing thin ice. Two of her sons had died carrying post: one drowned, the other froze to death.\textsuperscript{75} That said, the repeated complaints about postmaster Rudbeck in Uppsala suggest that there were postmasters who were less committed to such an ethos, however.\textsuperscript{76}

The phrase ‘night and day’ in the ordinance is to be interpreted literally. The postriders really did ride through the night. This refusal to let the daily rhythm of sunlight and darkness intervene with the steady rhythm of post deliveries was probably more remarkable than their contempt for the weather. There were few organized activities that were not ruled by the simple maxim that one worked by light of day and rested at night. In Sweden, with its immense differences in daylight hours depending on the season, this also meant a seasonal difference in working time, where the summer meant long, intensive working days.\textsuperscript{77} The postriders and postmasters ignored this; or at least they were expected to do so.

There were good reasons to avoid travelling at night. One has to admire the courage of the postriders, often not yet adults, who did. Neither towns nor countryside had much in the way of lighting; all one could hope for was moonlight and the stars, in winter-time helped along by the reflecting snow. Travellers could light their way with lanterns or torches,\textsuperscript{78} but that was far easier on a coach than on horseback. The darkness brought with it dangers that were easier to avoid in daylight. There was, of course, a greater risk of losing one’s way. Accidents were also more likely. Holm refers to an example where a postrider was on his way through the forest of Kolmården at dark of night, and his horse stumbled between two logs of a bridge and broke its leg.\textsuperscript{79} Finally, there were the imagined dangers of ghosts, the Devil, and all the other horrors that populated the world at night.\textsuperscript{80}

The posting times for letters at the General Post Office in Stockholm – the late afternoon – can be interpreted as an adaptation to its customers, the merchants and public officials, who ended their working day by dispatching the post. Johan Lange even once proposed that the posting time should be some hours earlier in winter (between Michaelmas and Easter) as the Post Offices did in Denmark and Germany.\textsuperscript{81} The difference between Lange’s proposal and the modern standard summer-time in use in the EU is that it is now easier to change the clocks than all our schedules.

This adaptation meant that the employees at the post offices worked night shifts. One of von Möller’s complaints in 1710 was that the clerks did not even

\textsuperscript{75} Lundgren 1987, pp. 28–29.
\textsuperscript{76} For Rudbeck, see also Grape 1951, pp. 612–613.
\textsuperscript{77} Garnert 1993, pp. 96–100.
\textsuperscript{78} Garnert 1993, pp. 64–66.
\textsuperscript{79} Holm 1906–1929, v. pt. 1, p. 343.
\textsuperscript{80} Garnert 1993, pp. 112–115.
\textsuperscript{81} Holm 1906–1929, v. pt. 2, p. 23.
begin their work before three or four in the afternoon.  

This was a habit that von Möllers predecessor had also tried to stop eleven years before. The second clause in his regulations of 1699 states that clerks should be at work well before departure time, and that they should not arrive in the evening at 5 or 6 p.m. The same regulation states that the supervisor has to be at work before the packets of letters were ready, at 10 or 11 p.m., when letters from noble gentlemen were still frequently arriving.  

For the employees at the General Post Office in Stockholm, the most intensive work began when most other people were preparing for bed. Johan Lange, Daniel von Möller, and the others at the General Post Office worked hours that before electric light were regarded as the middle of the night. They remind us of the overworked Philip II who a century or so earlier had sat late at night vainly attempting to clear his desk of its piles of papers before he could sleep, a victim of a flow of information that he had to consume and respond to without delay.  

In a dark Stockholm, the General Post Office house with its lighted windows must have stood out, perhaps matched only by the castle, where some of those gentlemen whom Lange insisted the post office staff had to respect finished the letters that could not wait until the next departure.  

Dohrn-van Rossum remarks that the conflict between urban time, largely oriented towards daylight, and the post deliveries, riding night and day, was a recurrent theme for the Thurn und Taxis service.  

Swedish post riders riding at night might find the town gates closed. Often this only resulted in minor difficulties if the guard happened to be absent, but in the fortified towns, passage at night was prohibited. Post-farmers had to wait out the night outside the gates of the fortified towns of Halmstad and Göteborg before they could retrieve the returning mailbags. Outside the gates of Halmstad, the farmers waited in small huts. A cable could be strung up in order to haul the mailbags over the walls.  

The postal service even ignored the canonical hours. Ever since the Christianization of Sweden, the church had had a deep impact on the people’s daily rhythm. During the Reformation and years of the Lutheran orthodoxy that followed in the seventeenth century Sweden, the number of Catholic feast-days was drastically reduced. Instead, the church and the state together imposed a steady weekly rhythm of six days of work and Sunday as the Sabbath, a day of rest and service to God.  

In the central administration, a weekly schedule was prescribed, with Mondays to Fridays as working days. Working hours were thoroughly set, thus imposing a time discipline that separated working time from leisure time.

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88 Malmstedt 1994, pp. 81–82.
89 Florén 1987, pp. 511–512.
For the farmers, such a distinction was impossible. They were more ruled by the weather and the seasons than by the clock – but they nevertheless had to observe religious time, signalled by the bells ringing from the church.\textsuperscript{90} For the postal system, however, speed was of the essence. The requirement to ride night and day also meant riding on Sundays. In order to investigate a delay of twenty-four hours to a post delivery in 1688, inspector Johan Lange calculated the expected delivery time from Riga to Åbo, on the basis that every Swedish mile should take a maximum of 1½ hours. By his reckoning there was no time for a day’s rest on the Sabbath. Post that departed from Riga on Thursdays between 5 and 6 p.m. should arrive at Dorpat on Saturday, from whence it should depart at 6 p.m., at the very hour the church bells heralded the Sabbath. It arrived in Wesenberg on Sunday, from where it continued at 2 p.m. One week later the post arrived in Helsingfors from Borgå at midnight on Saturday, and left Helsingfors for Åbo on Sunday at 11 a.m.\textsuperscript{91}

There is, however, some evidence that church services were attended – at least by the postmasters and probably by the postriders as well. In Lange’s example, the post remained in Helsingfors for eleven hours before departing for Åbo at 11 a.m. His annotations do not reveal when the post arrived at Wesenberg, but it departed thence on the Sunday afternoon, well after church. In contrast to the uncommented break in Helsingfors, Lange remarks that there was time to gain by shortening a four-hour break in Nyen.\textsuperscript{92} Meanwhile, in the \textit{Instruction to the postmasters} of 1707, postmasters are obliged to be on duty, ready to receive and deliver letters to the townspeople every day from 8 a.m. until dinner, and in the afternoon until 7 p.m., \textit{with the exception of church services}. The instruction does not regulate specific working hours when it comes to the arrival and departure of the post, however. Instead, the postmaster was meant to be always on the alert, or to arrange for a replacement.\textsuperscript{93}

\textbf{Time-keeping and technology – the use of clocks}

Technological innovation has often been at the centre of new communication systems, from the telegraph and the railway in the 1830s to the Internet today. Similarly, early modern communication systems have been connected to technological innovation, be it Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press, shipbuilding, or the navigation of open seas developed in the Iberian Peninsula in

\textsuperscript{91} Kanslikollegium, Estland och Livland samt inrikes, 1687–1695, vol. G 2 F:1, Kontrollören J Langes visitationsberättelser, RA.
\textsuperscript{92} Kanslikollegium, Estland och Livland samt inrikes, 1687–1695, vol. G 2 F:1, Kontrollören J Langes visitationsberättelser, RA.
\textsuperscript{93} Kongel. Canztie-Collegy Utfärdade Instruction för sampel. Postmästare i gemen ..., givet Stockholm 16 Februari 1707. § 4, Kongelige och andra wederbörandes förordningar angående postväsendet 1707, p. 251.
the fifteenth century. The postal system represents something different. Instead of relying on technological innovations for its development, improvements came from new organizational patterns of co-ordination. It was the institutions and the sheer scale of the organization involved that characterized the system.

Anthony Giddens explores the importance of abstract expert systems, or ‘systems of technical accomplishment or professional expertise’,94 that in modern societies keep our daily life functioning: from our electricity supply and the underground that transports us to work, to the banks that manage our transactions. Expert systems are mechanisms that ‘disembed’ social relationships from local contexts of interaction and are thus closely linked to time–space distanciation.95 The concept suits the early modern postal system well: it was an early example of an expert system.

In his history of the Thurn und Taxis Post Office, the German historian Wolfgang Behringer argues that the early modern European postal system would prove paradigmatic for later communication systems, such as railways, air traffic, telephones, and the Internet, in structure as well as in organizational details.96 The postal system introduced principles such as reliability, calculability (of delivery times and price), punctuality, and equality among customers, and amongst its innovations were tariffs, itineraries, travel guides, newspapers, timetables, and tickets.97 Successive communication systems in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries could apply these institutional devices to new technological solutions.

Of course, technology was used, and technological standards were important for the achievements of the system, but this was rarely technology that was specifically developed for the postal system, or even the outstanding technology of the age. The Swedish evidence even indicates that the lack of financial input in the system resulted in inferior equipment. The postmaster in Nyen reported in 1701 that a postrider had got stuck in a traffic jam behind a contingent of soldiers, because he lacked a post-horn to signal his arrival. The postmaster also complained about the wooden saddles used on the route, which wrecked the horses.98

However, the postmasters and other professionals in the postal system had a special interest in the use of the most advanced machine of the time – the clock. Keeping time was an important part of the system. The postmasters had to be aware not only of which day it was, but also of hours and quarters. And they had

94 Giddens 1991, p. 27. The same term is used for artificial intelligence, a subgroup of computerized knowledge systems, interacting with human experts (Sagheb-Tehrani 1993, pp. 30–34). Though sharing several characteristics, Giddens’s broader concept does not posit a computerized technological system.
95 Giddens 1990, pp. 21–22.
96 Behringer 2003, pp. 42–43.
97 Behringer 2003, p. 683.
98 Postverket centralarkivet, Teodor Holms excerptsamling, Avskrifter av handlingar som har anknytning till post från 1500- och fram t.o.m. 1800-talet, 1701, sign. Ö 1 B:28, Letter to the General Post Director, 25 January 1701, RA.
to manage it not only in daytime, when they could estimate the time from the
sun, but also at night.

The ordinances of 1636 and later laid down that the postmasters should not
detain the post on its arrival: the postmaster had no more than a quarter or half
an hour at his disposal to sort the post before its departure. Certainly this put the
postmasters under pressure of time, yet it did not require recognition of the
correct time of day. The time taken could be checked with an hour-glass. The
‘post boy’ (postpojk) at the post office turned the hour-glass when he carried the
post inside so he and the postmaster could check that they were not running
behind. 99 This time measurement served the purpose of speeding up the process,
in the same way as the post-horn signalled to the postriders and postmasters to
ready themselves for the arrival of the post. Neither should it be thought that
hour-glasses were necessarily inferior to clocks. When measuring the duration of
an event, without the need to relate elapsed time to a specific time of day, hour-
glasses were then more accurate devices than most clocks, especially when mea-
suring quarters. 100

For another of the postmasters’ routines, however, hour-glasses were insuffi-
cient. The postmasters needed sundials or mechanical clocks to tell the time
when they filled in the hour passes that accompanied the mailbag, used to verify
the speed the postriders had travelled. 101 It was not enough to use the church-
clock in a town as a local standard time; all the clocks along the whole route had
to show roughly the same time. In other words, the control of speed demanded a
common clock-time at different locations.

It would be almost two more centuries before the need of a national standard
time was felt, even though the technology was at hand. This need was connected
with the introduction of the railways. 102 The only standardization needed for the
seventeenth-century Post Office was that the clocks in the towns should show
the correct local time – a time accurate to the sun’s position. This sounds easy
enough, but the Post Office was probably one of the few bodies who required
this type of time-keeping not only locally but also nationally; not only by day,
but also at night. In his study of three local communities, Henrik Ågren shows
time-keeping to have been part of a social interaction that was mainly local. The
inhabitants heard the clocks strike more than they watched the time; and those
involved in a social interaction, such as mining or attending a sermon, all heard
the same clock. Ågren finds evidence in the judicial records that the courts were
more likely to ask for specific clock-times in 1730 than in 1650, but that the
answers remained very vague, suggesting that time-keeping was not routine for

102 Bartky 2000, pp. 1–2; Lundmark 1989, p. 50–58.
the witnesses. Teodor Holm adds examples of inaccurate clocks from the beginning of the eighteenth century, and concludes that the reality did not fully meet the ambitions of the control system. The weak point was access to clocks, and the poor technical standards of town clocks. A report in 1704 showed that few postmasters owned a mechanical clock, and their sundials were useless at night and in cloudy weather. According to the inventories, the post offices were not equipped with clocks, and some even lacked hour-glasses. On the other hand, Holm’s examples show postmasters, such as Richard Olufsson in Halmstad, who were much concerned at the problem of time-keeping and inaccurate clocks: Olufsson pointed out that a suspected slow deliveries between Helsingborg and Halmstad were rather the result of inaccurate clocks in the small towns in between. Initially, the director of the Post Office in Stockholm, Samuel Åkerhielm senior, seemed unaware of the problem.

Olufsson and other postmasters pushed for improvements in time-keeping with mechanical clocks in the towns at the beginning of the eighteenth century. This echoed moves in the Prussian Post Office, where regulations of 1710–1712 stated that clocks that were out of sync would no longer be accepted as a valid excuse for delayed post. The postmasters had to urge officials and town magistrates to adjust the clocks according to the sun. Technological improvements in the preceding decades had paved the way for the use of mechanical clocks for time-keeping, most notably the Dutchman Christiaan Huygens’ invention in 1656 of a far more accurate timepiece, the pendulum clock, which had spread to Sweden within a couple of decades. In the seventeenth century, the clock-maker’s profession was close to non-existent in Sweden. Before the first Swedish clock-maker’s guild was founded in Stockholm in 1695, the clock-makers were locksmiths or were included in the locksmiths’ guilds. In 1700 a firm in Stjernsund received privileges to produce, among other things, mechanical clocks, while the early eighteenth century saw the production of pocket-watches in Sweden, suggesting a growing demand.

The techniques for more accurate time-keeping were thus rapidly evolving at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and the Post Office responded with
interest. One obstacle was the poor financial state of the postal system, or rather
the postmasters’ finances (see Droste’s chapter in this volume). The use of the
latest technology was too expensive to be within the reach of many postmasters;
they continued to rely on the town’s church-clock. Still, clocks were an in-
dispensable technical asset for the postal expert system in its ambition to quick-
en and co-ordinate its deliveries.

Delivery speeds for mail and sea-mail

Some proposals have been made based on calculations for the route via the Åland
Sea and via Porkkala, with the same accuracy as one can achieve with the land
post, and when, as has sometimes happened, the weather and wind have been
beneficial, they have been convinced by that that the post always can be delivered
at the same speed; something that on occasion proves to be wrong.112

When it came to speeds overland and at sea, the superiority of sailing-ships was
illusive, as this quotation from the Chancery Board indicates. A warship such as
the French *Invincible* of 1744, or the American *Constitution* of 1797, reached
maximum speeds of about 25 km/h,113 but that was their maximum speed, not
their average. The speed of sailing-ships was unpredictable, and from that it
follows that the duration of journeys was equally unpredictable. Instead of fair
winds, ships could be becalmed for weeks. Riders were not unaffected by wea-
ther, but it was usually easier to maintain a steady speed on horseback and thus
stick more closely to a timetable.

The Chancery Board was experienced enough to dismiss calculations that
failed to consider this drawback to transporting post by sea. In this particular
memorandum, addressed to governor-general Erik Dahlbergh in Riga, the
Chancery Board discussed the problems of the slow Stockholm–Riga land route
via Finland. The Chancery Board mentioned the dangers inherent in the Åland
Sea and Porkkala–Reval crossings as one of the obstacles. In the latter case, this
often meant that by the time the post from Porkkala arrived in Helsingfors, it
had missed the connection with the westbound post from Ingria to Stockholm
via Helsingfors, and had to wait for the next post.114 Those routes were proble-
matic not only in the winter, but also in summer because of storms and contrary
winds. Experiments with post-yachts on these routes had proved unsatisfactory.115

The problems were so difficult that an alternative route ten times as long was
often used in winter-time, through sparsely populated country in northern Swe-

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112 Memorandum from the Chancery to governor-general Dahlbergh in Riga, 6 May 1697,
113 Hugill 1993, Table 3.1, p. 122.
den and Finland. At the end of the seventeenth century, the Post Office also considered a route from Uleåborg in Österbotten to Viborg, a suggestion that was met with scepticism in the memorandum. The route went right through wilderness, with an estimated distance of up to six hundred kilometres between post offices (in reality, the longest leg was between the post offices of Kajana and Nyslott, a distance of three hundred kilometres), with bad roads, or no roads at all, for much of the route. Both that route and the proposed sea-route were in fact realized soon after the outbreak of the Great Northern War in 1700.

**Hour passes**

The question here is how fast letters were conveyed and what the length of the resulting information circles might have been. The hour passes (*postpass*) used by the Post Office to keep tabs on the postriders and postmasters are the primary source material in this study. Hour passes had long been in use, beginning in Renaissance Italy. The postmasters wrote down the time of arrival and departure on the hour pass that was carried by the postriders along the route. Unfortunately, very few hour passes have survived. Those that have are useful tools in researching the speeds at which the postriders travelled.

Since it was the postmasters in the towns who recorded the time on the hour passes, it was not immediately obvious what had happened on the country stretches. One way of solving this was to fine all the post-farmers on that section of the route for a delay. As we have seen already, the accuracy of the time-keeping was another problem. Despite this, the hour passes were efficient instruments of control. For the Post Office, an investigation of a series of hour passes soon revealed deviations from the ideal pattern, plus approximately where on the route the problem had occurred. The problem with time-keeping could result in extreme values. The most impressive records of high-speed performances thus have to be scrutinized, especially if they were preceded or followed by very poor speeds. There is less risk that an error would be reproduced, however, since sooner or later it would be corrected by more accurate timekeeping at a post office further along. In the end, the position of the sun could help to correct errors. Systematic cheating was difficult, for the same reason. The next postrider and postmaster in the chain had reason to protest, since it would be at the expense of their own recorded speed performance.

Hour passes are not the only valuable source, however. Alternative sources sometimes offer detailed information on the time taken over the short distances between two posts. In her dissertation on business information transmission abroad in the nineteenth century, Seija-Riita Laakso uses sailing lists as a source.

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\(^{118}\) Forssell 1936, i, p. 282.
to analyse information circles, after a survey of other methods and sources used to measure the speed and duration of postal transmission.\textsuperscript{119} Laakso excludes hour passes from her survey (they are not relevant to nineteenth-century sea-mail), but the sailing lists published in newspapers resemble the kind of information that can be extracted from hour passes, with the difference that sailing lists only note dates of arrival, not hours or quarters as in the hour passes.\textsuperscript{120} Hour passes are more specific than the other methods used, but they are silent about the first and last parts of the circle: from the correspondent to the post office; and from the post office to the recipient.

A limitation to hour passes as sources is that they probably survived as part of an investigation, initiated because of concerns over slow deliveries. However, this is not an insurmountable problem. Either any delay can be narrowed down to a particular post office or section of route, or the investigation was initiated because of the general slowness of deliveries. In the former case, a deviating value is easy to distinguish; in the latter, the hour pass probably survived as a representative example of a problematic route.

What follows is concerned with the speed of deliveries, but is also partly inspired by Laakso’s method of studying information circles. While it has not been possible to count the number of consecutive information circles annually, given the fragmentary sources and the limited scope of the survey, hour passes lend themselves to measuring the time for a single information circle. Laakso stresses that the length of an information circle not only depends on the duration of the two separate deliveries, but also on the frequency of sailings (for which read departures from post offices) and whether there was enough time for the recipient to write an answer.\textsuperscript{121}

### Average speed overland

In the surviving hour passes the average speed between post offices ranged between 3.5 km/h and 8.1 km/h. In some it is possible to calculate the speed on the road (the total time, including stops at post offices to sort packets of letters and fill in the hour passes). On the road, the average speed was never below 4.6 km/h (Table 2.1). Speeds below 3 km/h on the road were unusual, and must have involved some kind of interruption, not just slow horses ambling at a walking pace. Postriders sometimes got lost, or disregarded their responsibility to ride in night and day, or were not prepared when the post was handed over.

\textsuperscript{119} Laakso 2007b, pp. 29–40; also Laakso 2007a, pp. 85–87, 99–100, and Table 6.1.

\textsuperscript{120} Laakso 2007b, p. 37, passes over the more detailed but less accessible sources.

\textsuperscript{121} Laakso 2007a, pp. 101–102.
Map 2.1 Average speed and duration for postal conveyance to and from Stockholm, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, according to hour passes

About 10 km/h was also a rather uncommon upper limit. The speed of 16.6 km/h between Arboga and Köping in 1711 casts some doubts over the accuracy of the time-keeping, but is not impossible. There are records of Charles XI riding at speeds of 19 km/h in the same region. The impressively slow deliveries between Västerås and Enköping in 1718 (0.5 km/h) involved a delay of three days.

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122 Retsö 2007, p. 88.
days at the Västerås post office, probably awaiting the post from Göteborg. It reveals the problem of co-ordination that seems to have been an important cause of delay on those routes that were not regarded as main routes. When co-ordination across the network did not work out perfectly, the hierarchy of routes and destinations decided which posts had to be held up. Stockholm was the destination at the top of the hierarchy.

Table 2.1 Overland speeds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route</th>
<th>Average km/h*</th>
<th>Min km/h*</th>
<th>Max km/h*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Åbo–Riga (1688)</td>
<td>3.5 total</td>
<td>1.0 total</td>
<td>5.4 total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.6 road</td>
<td>1.8 road</td>
<td>10.7 road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockholm–Karlskrona (1714)</td>
<td>3.6 total</td>
<td>1.9 total</td>
<td>6.0 total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.9 road</td>
<td>3.9 road</td>
<td>6.0 road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Åbo–Villmanstrand (1724)</td>
<td>4.0 total</td>
<td>2.0 total</td>
<td>6.0 total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.0 road</td>
<td>2.0 road</td>
<td>6.0 road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gävle–Stockholm (1720, 1722)</td>
<td>4.4 total</td>
<td>2.9 total</td>
<td>5.4 total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.6 road</td>
<td>3.8 road</td>
<td>5.4 road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uleåborg–Gävle (1710)</td>
<td>4.8 total</td>
<td>3.8 total</td>
<td>7.4 total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.9 road</td>
<td>3.8 road</td>
<td>7.4 road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ystad–Växjö (1716)</td>
<td>5.4 total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockholm–Falun (1718)</td>
<td>6.0 total</td>
<td>0.5 total</td>
<td>7.6 total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.2 road</td>
<td>5.0 road</td>
<td>10.7 road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockholm–Göteborg (1702, 1711)</td>
<td>6.2 total</td>
<td>3.1 total</td>
<td>15.8 total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.6 road</td>
<td>3.3 road</td>
<td>16.6 road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockholm–Karlshamn (1720)</td>
<td>6.5 total</td>
<td>2.8 total</td>
<td>10.7 total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.6 road</td>
<td>4.9 road</td>
<td>10.7 road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockholm–Helsingborg (1714)</td>
<td>6.6 total</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.3 total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.8 road</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.3 road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamburg–Assensfæhr (1709)</td>
<td>8.1 total</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.0 total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.2 road</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.0 road</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*) Average, minimum, and maximum values are speeds measured for actual travelling time.
Total = overall speed including stops at relays (departure–departure); road = speed achieved by the postrider on the road (departure–arrival).
***) Several other hour passes on the route from 1720–1721 show only small variations in the hours taken.


Though these are figures well below top speeds for horseback travel in early modern Sweden, they are faster than the common speed of travelling – and conveying letters – from the fourteenth to the early sixteenth centuries, according to calculations by the Swedish economic historian Dag Retsö, using both travellers’ accounts and dates from letters as his sources. Retsö reckons a maximum day’s journey was about 70 kilometres, or a little less than 3 km/h when including the hours of rest. The average length of a day’s journey was much less: between 30
and 40 kilometres. Some evidence referred to by Retsö from foreign travellers from the late sixteenth to the early eighteenth centuries indicates that the standard length of a day’s journey had not change much, although they occasionally rose up to 160 km. For comparison, horse-drawn vehicles in early nineteenth-century England had an optimum speed of c. 4–4.5 km/h. A higher speed could be accomplished, but this meant that more of the horses’ energy had to be used just to keep them moving. More horses had to be harnessed, changes of horse had to be more frequent, and consequently the costs grew exponentially against the gain of only marginally faster speeds.

Days of departure

It was not the speed of the deliveries alone that decided the duration of an information circle; the frequency with which post was dispatched was as important. Correspondents in Riga were fortunate in this respect at least in 1688 – if they were prepared to produce an answer within twenty-four hours. After a journey that lasted 21 days and 15½ hours from its dispatch from the Stockholm post office at 10.30 p.m. on 6 March, the post arrived at the Riga post office at 2 p.m. on 28 March; it then left Riga again for Stockholm at 2 p.m. on 29 March, and arrived a month later. In this case, the days of dispatch had little impact on the duration of the information circle. In the case of the post from Stockholm to Göteborg in 1702, the post left Stockholm at 12.30 a.m. on 30 January and arrived in Göteborg 99 hours later at 3 a.m. on 3 February; the correspondents in Göteborg then had 36 hours to respond before the return post to Stockholm at 3 p.m. on 4 February, where it arrived 100 hours later. Here the elapse before the post’s return to Stockholm played a bigger part in the information circle, since the time on the road was shorter. As in Riga, correspondents in Göteborg, far from being annoyed by the wait, probably had to hurry to pen their responses. They probably had less than 24 hours from retrieving a letter at the post office to handing their answer to the postmaster.

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124 Retsö 2007, pp. 100, 106.
125 Gerhold 1993, pp. 188–189.
126 Laakso 2007a, p. 94.
Map 2.2 Frequency of departure and arrival of post to Stockholm, ca 1700

The general postage tariff, in use since 1693 but only published in 1707 (with some modifications), also records the days of departure and expected arrival times of post to and from the Stockholm post office. The timetable was designed to give one day’s time between arrivals and departures (see Map 2.2). The tariff does not record the other post offices’ timetables, but the evidence from the hour passes suggests that the final post offices on a route such as Göteborg and Riga designed their timetables in the same manner. In the beginning of the

129 Underrättelse om Postgången ... med hoos fogad Bref-taxa, Kongelige och andra wederbörandes förordningar angående postväsendet 1707, pp. 81–82.
eighteenth century, departure times were supervised by the director of the Post Office in Stockholm, but it had also evolved from local practices in the various post offices, as indicated by the correspondence between the director general of the Post Office and the governor, referred to above.

When the postal service was organized in the 1630s and 1640s, the ordinary posts went weekly. In the 1650s, post on the Stockholm–Halmstad route went twice a week, and in the 1680s twice-weekly post was introduced on a number of other routes.\(^{130}\) Map 2.2 gives the routes from Stockholm with ordinary post twice a week. The Stockholm post to and from Göteborg and the towns in Skåne, Hamburg, and the German provinces went twice a week, but travelled by different routes. South-going post either took the route to Ystad and then by sea to Stralsund, or went via Halmstad to Helsingør in Denmark. Post to Göteborg was sent either via Örebro and the province Västergötland, or to the south to Jönköping and then westwards.

The introduction of several routes with an ordinary post twice a week was a major contribution to time–space convergence, and its effects must have been most obvious on routes where deliveries did not take long. When deliveries took a month, as between Riga and Stockholm in 1688, the option of sending two letters a week affected the information circle less than on the Stockholm–Göteborg route, where delivery took only four days. The ordinary twice-weekly post meant above all that south and central Sweden experienced a time–space convergence in the 1680s. It also meant a convergence on a number of ‘highways’ leading to Stockholm. The network’s byways that did not include Stockholm generally maintained a weekly ordinary post, although a twice-weekly post was introduced on the west coast from Halmstad to Strömstad.

The post office in Älvkarleby serves as an example of the distances that can be measured in information circles. Although not even a town, Älvkarleby had a central position in the belt of iron-producing industries that were built up in the seventeenth century and became important iron exporters above all to the Dutch Republic and Britain.\(^{131}\) With the general postage tariff introduced in 1693, correspondents in Älvkarleby could reach close to 80,000 townspeople in their network at the low postage rate of 2 silver öre.\(^{132}\) The post office in Älvkarleby was also well sited for the quick transmission of letters. Two hour passes for the Gävle–Stockholm route from May 1720 and May 1722 show that the post from Älvkarleby to Stockholm took about 24 hours, although the post in both cases had been much delayed on the Uppsala–Stockholm run (on one occasion, the

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\(^{130}\) Forssell 1936, i, pp. 92–94.

\(^{131}\) Florén & Rydén 1992, pp. 100–102.

\(^{132}\) Figures are estimated from an analysis of the reconstructed population in Lilja (2000, pp. 404–406), and the postage tariff for Älvkarleby (Underrättelse om Postgången … med hoos fogad Bref-taxa, Kongelige och andra wederbörandes förordningar angående postväsendet 1707, pp. 84–85).
horse had thrown its postrider and bolted into the woods). The Älvkarleby–Hamburg information circle would have been about two weeks. The post went twice a week, arriving at Stockholm on Wednesdays and Saturdays; from there it was dispatched on Thursdays and Mondays, thus allowing an information circle of about three days. If not delayed, post from Älvkarleby could depart from Stockholm with the south-going post to Hamburg on the same day it arrived at the Stockholm post office. Ideally, the route to Hamburg or Stralsund via Ystad would take about six days.

The information circles from Älvkarleby to the neighbouring provinces of Dalarna and Västmanland were probably longer than from Älvkarleby to Stockholm, despite being closer to Älvkarleby as the crow flies. The post either had to go via Stockholm and Västerås, or north via Gävle. This caused problems of co-ordination. In one of the hour passes, the post to Stockholm had been detained in Gävle, as the postmaster there had waited in vain for the post from Hedemora to the west. The post from Falun to Stockholm in December 1718 had been detained in Västerås for the same reason, and in the opposite direction its delivery took 104 instead of 38 hours.

Twice-weekly post brought with it a time–space convergence within the Swedish Empire, especially in Stockholm’s communications with southern and central Sweden. However, the frequency was still modest compared with the standards for other countries. Johan Lange reports on post days from a number of European post offices in 1694. From Paris, post departed northwards to Spanish Flanders (Brussels, Antwerp, etc.), Picardy (Arras, Ypres, etc.), and a number of major towns (Cambrai, Condé, Valenciennes etc.) at noon seven days a week. To Lorraine in the east, the post departed at 8 p.m. daily except Thursdays. Post on other routes departed Paris less frequently – twice or three times a week. In sum, fifty-two posts departed Paris every week. Paris had a bias towards communication with Northern Europe and the northern parts of France. The ‘Spanish post’ was not considered an ordinary post, and left only every fortnight. From Berlin, thirty posts departed the Brandenburg Post Office every week.

Sweden lagged far behind the French and Prussian information circles.

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134 Underrättelse om Postgången ... med hoos fogad Bref-taxa, Kongelige och andra wederbörandes förordningar angående postvisendet 1707, pp. 77, 80, 82.


Speed, infrastructure, and the post-farmer system

The agrarian economy was the basis of the infrastructure necessary for Sweden’s postal traffic. There is a correspondence between densely populated regions in southern Sweden, Livonia, and Estonia, and the fastest post routes. These were regions with greater potential to provide a good infrastructure. Compared with the standards attained by the Thurn und Taxis organization, the Swedish Post Office’s achievements were not very impressive. The main reasons for this are to be found in the state’s means of command evident in the post-farmer system and the limited resources invested in the system.

At the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries, the Post Office put immense effort into improving the speed of its deliveries. When responding to von Möller’s accusation that he had detained the dispatch of the post in 1710, Johan Lange repeated his long-since proposed remedy for slow deliveries: pay post-farmers a decent fee and supply them with good horses. Lange’s proposal fell on deaf ears, for the Post Office could not afford such expenditure. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the chosen solution was not to allocate more resources to the post-farmers, but to improve the means of control and of time-keeping – hour passes being but one example.

On some routes, the Post Office tried using men hired specifically as postili- ons instead of the post-farmers and their postriders. The postilions were stationed at the post offices in the towns, often riding through the whole province, changing horses at the post-farmers’ farmsteads. They had the additional task of checking on the post-farmers and reporting negligence to the post-masters. Postilions were introduced in 1673, when 18 of them were employed at a salary of 52 dr sm per annum.

The main reason for using postilions was the suspicion that the post-farmers were too cautious with their own horses, and that it was possible to ride them harder. There were consequently complaints that postilions were riding horses into the ground. During the period, the number of postilions remained roughly the same, and it never became an institution that covered more than a small proportion of the post routes. In spite of its proven efficiency, the Post Office was never prepared to change to the more expensive postilions as a general system.

The strategy of the post-farmers – dictated by bare necessity for the poorer ones – was to escape as cheaply as possible, just like the Crown. Teodor Holm offers examples that show the ways in which such strategies worked against swift deliveries. It was unusual for post-farmers to ride with the mail themselves; in-

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140 Forssell 1936, i, pp. 286–289.
stead, they used the individuals who the farm could more easily dispense with, often small boys or girls. As the Post Office lamented, children were too small to ride fast, to lift the heavy mailbags back onto their mount if they fell, or generally to take care of themselves. On the other hand, boys were said to have an advantage over full-grown men, as they were not so heavy. The fear of overburdening reveals something of the size and strength of the horses. The cart-horses on Swedish farms were considerably smaller than horses today. Farmers usually kept the animals on the brink of starvation when they over-wintered them in stables. The various accounts of wretched horses, especially in spring, were not just examples of occasional mistreatment. Like Johan Lange, one of the postmasters, Johan Sundell, suggested in a letter to director general Schmedeman in 1706 that post-farmers should have special mounts for the post that should always be shod. Schmedeman rejected the idea, commenting that post-farmers could never afford to keep horses just for use in the postal system, since their compensation was too small.

If one reason for the institution of the post-farmers was its historical legacy of corvée (the obligation to perform unpaid labour), it also implies another and more forceful demographic reason for their use. Fernand Braudel deemed Scandinavia (Sweden, Norway, and Finland) in the period 1300–1800 to be too thinly populated to maintain a civilization at all; Scandinavia was caught in a retarded medieval era on the periphery of Europe, with only limited parts of the region partaking in the life of European civilization. Certainly, Sweden was a sparsely populated country with a low and uneven rate of urbanization. The peasant population typically lived in hamlets and solitary farmsteads, rather than in villages that might have served as social nodes. A relay system simply had to rely either on the scattered peasant population and their farmsteads as a resource, or on the expensive alternative of building its own relay system from scratch.

The quality of the roads was another issue. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, some Swedish roads were little more than bridleways, and utterly unsuitable for coaches. They did not have ditches for drainage, nor were they metalled, and so they could easily turn into mud when it rained. During the seventeenth century, roads did improve somewhat, however, and are said to have reached an acceptable standard by the end of the century. Road maintenance depended on the resources available in the local peasant communities, since it was they who were responsible. Thus the quality of the roads must

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have been very dependent on local population densities. This may well be another reason why post travelled more slowly in sparsely populated areas. The geographer Nils Friberg certainly argues this point, although he notes the difference in effort required in winter, when modest depths of snow reduced the need for maintenance.\(^{149}\) As with ships and seaways, the preference for winter roads was often prompted by cargo transport, the efficiency of which was determined more by the maximum weight of the load than by its average speed.

In a letter of 1706, Johan Rydström, the postmaster in Umeå in the northern province Västerbotten, complained of his troubles with winter routes. In contrast to southern Sweden, where the winter roads were in daily use, one or two weeks could pass between travellers on the northern roads, while more than a metre of snow could fall in a single night, which made it hard to keep to the time-limit of 1½ hours per Swedish mile, Rydström explained.\(^{150}\) The post did not so much travel along winter roads as plough through snowdrifts.

Rydström’s letter prompted Johan Schmedeman to consider skis as an alternative to horses.\(^{151}\) At least to outdoor-loving contemporary Swedes, this alternative may seem rather obvious. In the seventeenth century, however, skiing was nothing like as common as it is today: it was more associated with the Sami people and their Swedish and Finnish neighbours in the roadless interior.\(^{152}\) The weight of the mailbags would also have been an obstacle. It is more likely that post-farmers used horse-drawn sledges when possible.

In Swedish historiography, winter roads trafficked by sledges generally have the reputation of being far superior to the summer roads. Overland cargo transport was often preferred in winter-time. The winter roads had good, hard surfaces once there had been sufficient frost. Frozen lakes were also well suited for cargo transports,\(^{153}\) yet while efficiency called on cargo carriers to maximize loads and accept slower speeds, the assumption in this survey is that this did not apply to postal deliveries. The arguments for the superiority of sledges have recently been scrutinized by Retsö, who finds them unsupported by the evidence, and true only under certain, rather limited conditions. The popularity of sledges was more due to their greater comfort than their speed. Moreover there was a physical limit to the speeds that could be achieved, for while the sledges needed a surface with little friction, the horses needed traction in order to pull them.\(^ {154}\)

One of the post routes most remote from civilization, in the sense of an urbanized and densely populated area, was the one established in Finland at the outbreak of the Great Northern War in 1700, which ran between Nyslott in the

\(^{149}\) Friberg 1951, pp. 269–272.
\(^{150}\) Holm 1906–1929, v. pt. 1, p. 337.
\(^{151}\) Holm 1906–1929, v. pt. 1, p. 337.
south-east and Uleåborg in the province of Österbotten in the north: from Nyslott it went north through the Lake District, running 300 km before it arrived at the small interior town of Kajana. After the territorial losses in the peace treaty with Russia in 1721, the route instead began in Villmanstrand in the south-east of the country. An hour pass for an extraordinary post in 1727 records that it had left Villmanstrand at 9.30 p.m. on 19 February and arrived in Uleåborg at noon on 26 February – a journey of seven days.\(^{155}\) This means it held a speed of about 3.5 km/h. Another hour pass from the same year reveals the distrust the commander in Villmanstrand, one Frisenheim, felt towards the post-farmers along the route. He instructed Lieutenant Granberg to accompany an extraordinary post packet destined for Stockholm all the way to Uleåborg, to urge the post-farmers to act with more than their ‘usual negligence’ and so prevent delays. In Uleåborg, Granberg was then to wait until he received an answer from Stockholm, and then return with it to Villmanstrand.\(^{156}\) Frisenheim’s distrust of the post-farmers in effect meant that he returned to the older courier system by which the post-farmers only provided horses.

Perhaps Granberg’s presence did indeed speed up the deliveries. Compared to the other routes in the north and east, an average speed of 3.5 km/h was not particularly slow. The Swedish Post Office in fact achieved what Braudel thought impossible, and connected the Swedish realm, even the remotest parts, with European civilization.

### Average speeds of sea-mail

The surviving hour passes offer some information about the traffic across the Åland Sea and through the archipelago between Åland and Åbo. The Åland Sea route connected Stockholm via Grisslehamn to Åbo on the Finnish side, the distance in the archipelago being about sixteen Swedish miles, and was already established in 1638, having grown out of an existing ferry service. The route was organized along the same lines as the overland routes, with the difference that the post-farmers here used boats instead of horses; they were obliged to transport travellers and post in their own boats,\(^ {157}\) which, being small and open, were not suitable for long distances.\(^ {158}\) The route across the Åland Sea was continuously open, and an ordinary post did indeed manage to operate along it. It

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\(^{158}\) Rudbeck 1933, p. 172.
was a notorious route because of the dangers the post-farmers encountered and the heroism they showed: fatal accidents were common.159

Such examples as do exist are few, and are barely sufficient for statistical analysis (Table 2.2). What we can learn is that post-boats across the Åland Sea were no faster than land transport. In fact, sea-crossings often meant that the post was slowed down. The hour passes of 1724 record a series of ten transfers from May to July. The fastest speed, 13.8 km/h between Grisslehamn and Ekerö on the c. 40 km route across the Åland Sea, may be evidence that the post-farmers’ boats were able to perform well in fair weather. On the other nine occasions, however, speeds were in the range of 2–7 km/h (1–4 knots); this equalled but did not surpass overland deliveries.

Table 2.2 Sea-mail speeds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route</th>
<th>No. of hour passes</th>
<th>Average km/h</th>
<th>Min. km/h</th>
<th>Max. km/h</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Norrtälje–Kastelholm (1688)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kastelholm–Åbo (1688)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grisslehamn–Åbo (estimated) (1700)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norrtälje–Grisslehamn (1724)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grisslehamn–Ekerö (1724)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekerö–Kastelholm (1724)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kastelholm–Åbo (1724)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helsingborg–Helsingør (1720–21)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The problem was not the crossing itself, but having to wait on the weather, as is indicated by the sometimes very slow transfers Norrtälje–Grisslehamn, Kastelholm–Ekerö, and Åbo–Kastelholm. On 19 May, the post was delayed 47 hours in Grisslehamn, and on 2 June it was detained for 61 hours. The actual crossing took a matter of hours, but waiting for the correct conditions could take several days. In April 1688 the transfer from Kastelholm to Norrtälje took ten days; it seems likely that on that occasion the post-farmers on Ekerö had had to wait eight or nine days for fair weather.

159 Rudbeck 1933, p. 171.
Figure 1 shows the time taken in hours on the Stockholm–Villmanstrand route in 1724 (the second posts indicate the returning post from Villmanstrand to Stockholm). In one case, the journey between Åbo and Villmanstrand took fully 169 hours, in another it took 118 hours, but the other eight show a fairly stable time of about four days (96–105 hours): the short Stockholm–Norrtälje stretch (c. 70 km) was less significant, even though its duration ranged considerably from 14 to 19 hours; instead, it was the Norrtälje–Åbo route, which included crossing the Åland Sea and the archipelago, that made the difference. For the post from Villmanstrand to Stockholm, the Åbo–Norrtälje transfer took only 74 hours; for another post on 14–25 June it took 169 hours. With the exception of the first recorded post of 11–20 May, when the Åbo–Villmanstrand stretch was
covered particularly slowly, it was the speed of the sea-passages that determined whether the post would be delivered quickly or not.

Hour passes for Stockholm–Helsingør give similar evidence of the hazards of sea-crossings. Sea-transport over the Danish straits was organized differently from that in Åland. Danish ferrymen were hired in Helsingborg and Helsingør (to cross the Sound), in Korsør and Nyborg (the Great Belt), and in Assens and Assensfærh (the Little Belt), financed by the Swedish postmasters in Helsingborg and Helsingør, and by the resident responsible for the Swedish post in Hamburg. The Swedish Post Office was free to contract ferrymen outside the ferrymen’s guilds, who held the privilege to all ferrying in the Danish towns, an opportunity that seems to have attracted high-ranking Danish burghers. The financial conditions varied. While the ferrymen contracted for the Little Belt crossing were paid 208 drs. per annum in the 1680s and 1690s, those at the Great Belt were paid more, a figure that increased with every new contract, from 900 drs. in the 1680s to the 2,400 drs. paid to the widow Apollonia Lund in 1704. In Helsingborg, the ferrymen were paid half a drs. for every journey.

The ferries over the Sound at Helsingborg–Helsingør, about 10 km wide at that point, appear to have been far slower than the boats crossing the Åland Sea. Maybe this was due to the fact that the records are from the autumn and winter, and that the shortness of the distance could distort the figures – time-keeping at a harbour in the beginning of the eighteenth century probably lacked the accuracy we expect today. On two occasions, the post was detained in Helsingborg because of the weather. On 10 October 1720 the hour pass records that the darkness of the night had delayed departure by several hours. It seems as if it finally sailed in the middle of the night, which seems a bit puzzling. Presumably the shipper was waiting for moonlight. On 20 November 1721 the postmaster in Helsingborg remarked that the post had been detained for a day because of stormy weather and contrary winds.

Although the hour passes give only a few examples of sea-passages, the delays are so common that it must have been reckoned a more or less normal condition. In the timetable included in the Stockholm tariff, it is stated that the post from Finland is expected on Tuesdays and Fridays ‘if it is not hampered by contrary winds and on the sea’. In no other case does the timetable express such doubts about the day on which the post will arrive.

The problem of boats having to wait to leave was not unique to the Swedish Post Office. Seija-Riita Laakso notes that in 1825 the delays to packet-ships sai-
ling from Liverpool to New York ranged from one to twelve days, the average being four days.\textsuperscript{163} The Liverpool–New York run, a privately-owned enterprise when it opened in 1818, was also the first Atlantic line that even bothered to schedule its departures; its General Post Office forerunner, based in Falmouth, had sailed monthly in the eighteenth century, but on exactly which day of the month was never made clear in advance. This made it hard for Atlantic correspondents to forecast the departure and arrival of the post.\textsuperscript{164}

In Sweden, the strategies for solving delays on land were better supervision, discipline, time-keeping, and co-ordination – organizational innovations, in other words. Improved conditions for post-farmers, with their poor horses and inadequate equipment, were more a distant thought, hard to realize within the limitations of the Post Office’s finances. With sea-traffic, technical standards and the weather imposed certain limits on what could be accomplished. Interruptions in maritime postal traffic could last for months, as the evidence from the Kalmar–Visby route in the 1690s shows. In 1712, there were post-yachts trafficking the Stockholm–Gotland route, but a letter from the island’s new governor shows that they were little better since winter often made the journey impossible. At the end of March he wrote that he had not received any letters from Stockholm for four months, despite the numerous post-boats that had arrived from Kalmar and Öland in that time. He suspected the reason to be that all letters from Stockholm had been loaded on the post-yacht, and that the post-yacht had not been able to depart because of the ice in the Stockholm archipelago.\textsuperscript{165}

The Ystad–Wittau/Stralsund route enjoyed the greatest success with post-yachts. In the timetables, the post-yachts were expected to depart Ystad on Thursday evenings and arrive at Wittau, c. 100 km distant, the next morning.\textsuperscript{166} The crossing normally took 24 hours, albeit a little faster with favourable winds. Of the post-yachts, Posthornet sometimes made the journey in 10–14 hours, and Postryttaren went even faster, on one occasion managing to make the journey in 8½ hours.\textsuperscript{167} From Wittau, the post travelled an additional 50 km by sea or land before it arrived in Stralsund on Friday afternoon. The return post from Wittau to Ystad left between Monday evening and Tuesday morning.\textsuperscript{168} In good conditions the journey would thus be accomplished at a speed of about 8–12 km/h, which meant that the performance of the post-yachts was far better than the post-farmer’s boats on the Åland Sea, and better than most overland deliveries. The entire Stockholm–Stralsund run was said to take six days.\textsuperscript{169} This was a time

\textsuperscript{163} Laakso 2007a, pp. 94–95.
\textsuperscript{164} Laakso 2007b, pp. 49–52, 55–59.
\textsuperscript{165} Skrivelser till Kungl Maj:t, Landshövdingars skrivelser I: Sverige, Gotlands län, vol. 4, 1710-1712, Governor Nils Posse to Kungl. Maj:t, 31 March 1712, RA.
\textsuperscript{166} Rudbeck 1933, pp. 32–33.
\textsuperscript{167} Rudbeck 1933, p. 60.
\textsuperscript{168} Rudbeck 1933, pp. 32–33.
\textsuperscript{169} Köppe 2006, pp. 118–119.
one had to expect on the Stockholm–Åbo route, which was only one-third of the distance.

However, it is obvious that the post-yachts did not always manage to do the journey in one night. The timetable even left it open whether the post-yacht would arrive at Wittau on Friday or Saturday morning. It was co-ordinated to fit in with the post leaving Stralsund for Hamburg at 4 p.m. on Saturday. The postilion on Rügen was instructed not to wait for the post-yacht beyond Sunday morning before proceeding to Stralsund. When facing contrary winds, the journey took 2–3 days, sometimes up to 5–6 days. Thus to minimize the problems caused by the weather, the route required three post-yachts, one held in readiness in Wittau if the arriving post-yacht was too delayed to return with the post on Monday evenings.

When the sea froze, the route was interrupted. This was a common event, both in Ystad and on Rügen. In the cold climate of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, sea-ice was more common than it is today. In six of the first ten years of the route’s existence, 1683–1692, the route was interrupted for two or three months in the winter-time. In the winter of 1708–1709 the sea-ice stretched tens of kilometres from both coasts. Parts of the sea were frozen as late as 20 April (O.S.), but by then the post-yachts had resumed. On land, cold winters did not hamper the post in the same way, although the postal system seemed not to have been able to use its potential to facilitate travel to the full.

With favourable winds, the post-yachts were superior in speed to the post-farmers’ deliveries on horseback as well as with the post-farmers’ boats. However, the co-ordination of post routes in Stralsund needed a margin of 24 hours to work, which in practice reduced overall performance. Three post-yachts were sufficient to ensure that single delays would not accumulate. In contrast to the Åland Sea, the climate was often beneficial enough to allow winter traffic, but even so, in many winters it was interrupted for months, and Swedish connections with Continental Europe became completely dependent on the traffic across Denmark.

Slow and irregular sea-traffic – a common European experience

Weather conditions other than ice, such as contrary winds, flat calms, or storms, hindered sea-going traffic everywhere, not just in the Baltic. Unpredictability was the common problem. Eighteenth-century figures for correspondence between Sweden and Swedish consuls in the Mediterranean confirm that letters

170 Rudbeck 1933, pp. 32–33.
171 Rudbeck 1933, p. 60.
172 Rudbeck 1933, p. 44.
174 Rudbeck 1933, p. 60.
175 Rudbeck 1933, pp. 82–83.
conveyed as overland mail arrived quicker than sea-mail, despite crossing the entire Continent. It was obstacles other than the weather – poor organization or war – that sometimes made the seaways better. During the bellicose early eighteenth century, Swedish consuls in Lisbon had to send their correspondence by boat: the time the post took from Lisbon to Stockholm was anything up to 4 or 5 months, compared to 40 days overland. For its correspondence from India, the English East India Company often preferred the long sea journey via the Cape of Good Hope to the land route, but that was for reasons of security, and despite the fact that the alternative overland route (Bombay–Basra–Aleppo–Constantinople–Venice/Marseille) was faster and unaffected by the monsoon season.

Few cities can have been better placed for sea-mail than seventeenth-century Amsterdam. About 5,000 ships arrived at the port every year. Already in the sixteenth century there was a regular, even timetabled, traffic with barges on the Dutch rivers. Unlike Sweden, Amsterdam and the Dutch Republic were densely populated and highly commercialized, which guaranteed large volumes of mail. The merchants in Amsterdam originally used ships for their correspondence with Baltic ports, yet when the postriders on the route began to ride instead in the mid seventeenth century, they were chosen instead. The Dutch historian Clé Lesger remarks that Amsterdam was fortunate to have access to sea-mail that went only slightly slower than mail overland – thanks to the large numbers of ships entering the port of Amsterdam. Milja van Tielhof shows in her research on the Dutch Baltic grain trade that communications between Dutch towns and Danzig improved considerably in the second half of the seventeenth century, when merchants could rely on a regular overland postal service instead of deliveries of letters by ship. At the end of the sixteenth century, the sea-passage between Danzig and the Dutch town of Delft varied from less than ten days to more than fifty days, with the majority of letters taking more than twenty days; it was slow, irregular, and dependent on the season (April to August were the best months to send a letter). In 1751, using overland postal services, deliveries took about ten days; sometimes less, sometimes more, but never as many as twenty days. And the post arrived equally quickly year round. As soon as a postal system reached a certain level of organization and could work in a reasonable secure and peaceful environment, its efficiency overland was greater than by sea. The Swedish Post Office was not unique in this experience.

177 Carlos & Hejeebu 2007, pp. 146–147.
Efficiency and costs of sea-mail

The historian Ian Steele suggests that there was a process of trans-Atlantic integration between Britain and its American colonies in the period 1675–1740, and that the postal service was part of that integration. The postal service to the Lesser Antilles and other small islands in the Atlantic is an example in miniature of the efficiency of water transport, according to Steele. No post office, no post boys, no roads were needed, just a ship that was already set for the Lesser Antilles and its sugar trade.¹⁸⁰ It is indeed a good example, but it also demonstrates the limitations of sea-mail. Had there not been an extensive trade with the Lesser Antilles, then there had been no justification in sending a post-boat to the few correspondents on the islands, still less to maintain a frequent postal traffic that ensured a regular flow of news to the islands. The case of the Stockholm–Visby route demonstrates this well. In 1689, the Chancery Board doubted whether the enterprise suggested by governor Gustav Adolf von der Osten genannt Sacken of post-yachts between Stockholm and Visby was warranted:

For our part, a further obstacle is that the establishing and maintenance of such a route [with post-yachts], would demand greater expenses than the expected income; because the postage earned from Gotland would not yield more (especially at first, as the inhabitants are used to sending their letters with shippers) than needed for salaries for the deliveries, and because with passengers and freight, we cannot reckon that sufficiently large incomes would be attained to maintain the route, let alone to cover the costs of the building or purchase of a post-yacht.¹⁸¹

The Chancery Board estimated the costs of buying a small yacht of the same model as those used on the Ystad–Stralsund route would be 500–600 rdr, with an additional 150–160 copper daler monthly for the maintenance of the yacht, excluding the extra costs for repairs. Still, in its answer to the king on the governor’s proposal, the Chancery Board found that the administration’s need for good communications with Gotland might justify the reallocation of resources from other post offices to a post-yacht.¹⁸² According to Johannes Rudbeck this was a usual decision. Sea-mail often ran at a loss, but was maintained because of the need for good communications.¹⁸³ In those cases strategic need, not profit, kept the sea-routes running.

Strategic reasons had also been important for the decision to establish the Ystad–Stralsund route in 1683. There, however, the route could prosper because

¹⁸⁰ Steele 1986, p. 119.
¹⁸³ Rudbeck 1933, p. v (preface).
of an inelastic demand for communication to Hamburg that allowed them to charge high postage. In the 1693 balance sheet for the Ystad post office, the income from freight on the sea-route (passengers and cargo) gave a small surplus that year (Table 3); but while freight was profitable, the costs were high as well. In comparison, the important post office in Narva paid a large amount in salaries, amounting to 216 dr sm for postilions with three horses in addition to a salary for the postmaster (most other post offices escaped the costs for postilions because the post was carried by post-farmers instead), a cost that was four or five times as high as in Ystad. Costs for supplies were fifteen times as high.

**Table 2.3 Income and costs of the post offices in Narva and Ystad, 1693 (in dr sm)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Narva</th>
<th>Ystad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postage / freight</td>
<td>1270</td>
<td>2892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale of the post-yacht <em>Theresia</em></td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Costs:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>1743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase of supplies</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairs to post-house, quay, yachts</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Balance</strong></td>
<td>1704</td>
<td>5603</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1) The table does not present the complete account for the two post offices. Surpluses, arrears, claims, and assignments of money for purposes outside the postal system are excluded, but were included in the respective balance-sheet totals.

2) Some of the posts from Ystad were reckoned in Pomeranian riksdaler, converted into Swedish dr sm.

Source: ÖPD, Postkammarkontoret, Huvudböcker, Konceptexemplar, 1693, vol. G 1 A:11; RA.

In studying the financial accounts of the Ystad–Wittau/Stralsund route of 1683–1693, Johannes Rudbeck has observed a slight deficit, but assumes that there was income concealed in the book-keeping, including revenue from postage, that could in fact have generated a profit. The income from postage from the route cannot be estimated from the books for a single post office, since most of the letters were posted and paid for at other post offices. In 1698, however, about 10,000 chargeable letters left Stockholm for destinations in Continental Europe south of Denmark (more than 6,000 of them were destined for Hamburg or Amsterdam, and c. 1,500 were addressed to towns in Western Pomerania). The postage to the German towns was 15 öre (of which 11 silver öre was the postage

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185 Rudbeck 1933, pp. 58–60.
186 Nylander 1928, p. 17, Tab. A.
for the Baltic crossing). The same year, only 302 letters were sent from Stockholm to Visby, and only 63 of those paid full postage. The Chancery Board thus had reason to be concerned about the costs of a Stockholm–Visby post-yacht.

The costs for the repair of the post-house, the quay, and the post-yachts, only found in the Ystad accounts, were more accidental, as was the income from the sale of a post-yacht. However, they illustrate the level of investment required for sea-mail. A post-yacht had a short life. By 1696, not a single original post-yacht from 1683 was in service, and while the income from the sale of one old post-yacht that year was 325 dr sm, the contract for building a new vessel the same year fixed the price at 2,275 dr sm.

Economic considerations had an impact not only on the decisions to open a route, but also on the speed of the post deliveries along it. As indicated in governor Gustav Adolf von der Osten genannt Sacken’s proposal and in the Chancery Board’s response, passengers and freight were the means to profit by post deliveries. Apropos the Atlantic postal traffic, Laakso concludes that the shortest information circles were obtained where there were two competing companies that specialized in postal traffic, but where postal deliveries were combined with cargo or passenger traffic, the shippers’ interest in quick delivery times dwindled.

In the event, the Ystad–Stralsund sea-route found passenger traffic and information transfers a happy combination, for passengers did not interfere with the demands for speed and reliable schedules for the post. But in the case of Gotland, where the postal traffic had to rely on freight rather than on small numbers of occasional passengers, the combination failed. The Chancery Board’s advice in 1689 marked the beginning of a series of short-lived experiments with post-yachts to Gotland: they all failed because of the Post Office’s unwillingness to take economic risks or to contract private entrepreneurs instead. One of the more lasting enterprises was when the inspector Samuel Hansten was contracted to maintain a postal route with a post-yacht in 1714–1717. The Post Office eventually abolished the contract because of the slowness of deliveries. One crossing was estimated to take an amazingly long 12 to 16 days (an average speed of 0.6–0.8 km/h). In addition, Hansten had the right to remain in harbour for twelve days for lading and unlading. All in all, the length of the Visby–Stockholm–Visby information circle was five to six weeks. The basic problem was an imbalance between strong administrative ties and weak commercial ties between Visby and Stockholm.
An initially reluctant Chancery Board finally launched the various sea-mail connections between Stockholm and several Baltic ports in the east and south suggested by governor-general Dahlbergh – a necessary measure to maintain communications after the outbreak of the Great Northern War in 1700. Some years later Johan Schmedeman, the new director general of the Post Office, reported success in the quest for fully laden post-yachts, and even foresaw the post route between Riga and Stockholm becoming profitable. At the same time, however, postal deliveries had had to adopt the logic of commercial cargo transports. Harbours were chosen ad hoc, wherever the cargo was to be found, and the post was forced to follow the seasonal nature of trade, since no merchant was willing to risk his or her goods in a hazardous crossing in winter-time. This was the same limitation that was imposed on the Atlantic postal traffic in the eighteenth century. The cheapest alternative – private shipping – neither provided a regular schedule nor a fixed harbour, while shippers were obliged to deliver letters in the first port they reached.

It was probably also because of the Post Office’s concern with profitability that the post-yachts had problems gaining the respect of the Swedish trading vessels with whom they competed. On several occasions in 1707 and 1708, post-yachts clashed with trading-vessels that had not signalled their proper allegiance to a royal ship, which even provoked the post-yachts to open fire on the merchantmen. A complaint from three post-shippers to the Chancery in 1707 states that the captains and crews on the merchantmen challenged a letter of protection dated 30 May 1703, and repeatedly made a mockery of the royal pennants that symbolized the post-yachts’ dignity. The main purpose of the letter of protection was to grant the post-yachts immunity from officials outside the Post Office who tried to use them for other purposes, but it also granted post-yachts priority in the harbours, and exempted them from all fees other than customs on the freight they carried.

The overall economy of the postal system was a balance between economies of scale, which rendered a single letter cheaper because it was transferred in a packet with other letters, and the value of the information, which was dependent on fast delivery: news was like dairy produce. The superior carrying-capacity
of a ship was what made sea transport cost-effective, but it took time to make up a ship-load – it would have taken years, had the cargo been only letters. Per voyage, a ship with its crew was far more expensive than a mounted post-farmer or a postilion. The land-bound economy of scale allowed for more frequent information transfers, once the infrastructure was in place.

The mechanism of different tipping points in its economies of scale was further strengthened towards favouring of overland deliveries, because the Post Office itself had to bear all costs for the post-yachts (the harbour, building a post-yacht, salaries for the crew), but only a minor proportion of the costs for maintaining post-farmers and the infrastructure on land. Although the decision-maker in postal matters up to 1698, the Chancery Board, had a general responsibility for decisions about the Crown’s allocation of its resources, the internal accounting system invoked a logic that made all investments in postal services beyond the post-farmers more expensive and exposed to market-regulated mechanisms.198

As long as commercial links and the postal network coincided, and as long as there was no demand for more frequent or regular communication than that provided by the occasional merchantship arriving in harbour, sea-mail could be as cheap as Ian Steele assumes the post to the Lesser Antilles to have been. When commerce and correspondence did not coincide, sea-mail became expensive to maintain. In the Swedish Empire, the match between commercial links and the administrative need for frequent and regular communication was poor. As Michael Roberts pointed out, the commercial links within the empire were weak. In the 1690s, the governor in Visby was alone in his need for frequent correspondence with Stockholm. Gotland’s commercial links faced southwards instead, following the old Hanseatic network.

Conclusions

I have suggested here that Sweden’s postal service was above all a prerequisite for administrative or bureaucratic power, inspired by Giddens’s concept of the time–space distanciation of power relations and by Harold Innis’s concept of imperial communication biases. Central to bureaucratic power is a need for a fast and reliable information flow and for open lines of communication. Although the Swedish fiscal–military state is frequently looked upon as an efficient bureaucratic organization in the raw, as indeed it was in many respects, this present study reveals an administration and an empire that suffered from an information problem: the information flow was slow and insecure. Post-days were infrequent, only once or twice a week, and deliveries were slow on several routes: 3.5–4.5 km/h or about half the standard speed of 7.5 km/h referred to in

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198 Simonson 2009a.
most of the European postal instructions. In a vast empire, this resulted in information circles that stretched over weeks, even months; a grave disadvantage for centralized decision-making in Stockholm, particularly during periods of crisis. In other words, the slowness of the post weakened such integration of the Swedish Empire as was brought about by administrative power. Sweden also suffered from the precarious situation of its information flow to and from the economic and political centres in Europe. Before the Stralsund–Ystad sea-route was established in 1683, Sweden was overly dependent on the route through often-hostile Denmark, which until 1689 prohibited mounted Swedish postilions, and consequently slowed the post considerably.

A hypothesis confirmed by the study is that the preference was for overland transport, by wagons or postilions on horseback. The superior carrying-capacities of ships were of little use here, since the logic of information transfer instead demanded the frequent and steady flow of transmissions. Punctuality at sea was harder to achieve because of the hazardous weather conditions. In winter, sea-traffic could even be interrupted for months at a time. Land transport could better meet the requirements of the synchronization of postal routes. With small volumes, sea transport also became expensive to maintain. Moreover, there was a mismatch between Swedish ambitions to maintain its Baltic maritime empire and the achievements of the postal services. Even if there was a general problem with speed and punctuality in the case of the Swedish Post Office, efforts were made in the last decades of the seventeenth century and the first decades of the eighteenth century to improve its performance. Sea-passage over the Baltic, however, continued to be a problem.

Two qualifications of this conclusion must be added. First, it is very likely, although it is not established here, that the postal service in the long run did contribute to a time–space convergence around the Baltic rim as well; that both Finland and the Baltic provinces of Estonia and Livonia were less ‘distant’ from Stockholm by the end of the seventeenth century than they had been at the beginning. Droste refers to a telling example of the Swedish efforts in espionage against Poland in the 1610s, which failed not due to a lack of useful information but because their communication lines were so bad that it took too long, was too insecure, and cost far too much to receive the information in time for it to be of any use.199 Without doubt, the situation had improved by the end of the seventeenth century, yet one effect of this was that the time–space convergence proceeded much faster in central Sweden and the newly conquered provinces in southern Sweden. Similarly, the time–space convergence with the commercial centres in Northern Germany and the Dutch Republic was if anything more dramatic. The efforts to improve the Swedish postal system were directed at the

politically and commercially important parts of Europe. In contrast, post routes to the Baltic provinces were slow.

One may observe a parallel discussion about the British Atlantic as a community. Historians have pointed to the developing postal networks in Britain and its American colonies in the eighteenth century as an element in the political and economic unification of Britain and the colonies respectively, and ultimately a structural reason for secession and the War of Independence. This view is questioned by Ian Steele, who argues that it ignores improved communications over the Atlantic, which contributed to the integration of Britain with its colonies.\(^{200}\) Obviously, the communication over the Atlantic improved in the eighteenth century. However, in relative terms, the integration process across the ‘English Atlantic’ lagged behind the integration processes at work on either side of it in the colonies and in Britain: in the seventeenth century, there was no postal system connecting the colonies; in 1770, the colonies were connected by a network consisting of 65 post offices.\(^{201}\)

Second, my argument is not that Sweden was a poorly integrated empire in every respect. Information problems were the chinks in the armour of a strong state in many respects. In more recent Swedish historiography, great emphasis has been placed on the ideological aspects of integration and collective identities,\(^{202}\) matched by an interest in constitutional matters and political culture. In marked contrast to the description of Sweden as a power state, or a fiscal–military state, the Swedish state has been conceptualized as a conglomerate state in which various realms had their own special relationship to the Crown.\(^{203}\) Within this debate, the position of Finland in the Swedish kingdom has been singled out. In his dissertation, Jonas Nordin claims that although Finland (here referring to the larger geographic entity, roughly conterminous with contemporary nation-state Finland) was not a separate entity from Sweden constitutionally, they were nevertheless perceived as two separate entities; indeed, increasingly so during the eighteenth century. Nordin criticizes the idea of a conglomerate state that considers southern Finland to be a central part of the Swedish state as embracing uncritically Matti Klinge’s perception of Sweden as a maritime empire, connected by the sea. True, seaways would facilitate economic integration, but there are other issues, as Nordin argues – adducing the military mindset that sought ‘natural borders’ along coastlines, rivers, or mountain ranges.\(^{204}\) Nordin has in turn been challenged on the basis of empirical evidence

\(^{200}\) Steele 1986, pp. 113–114, 131.
\(^{201}\) Lesger 2006, p. 275.
\(^{204}\) Nordin 2000, pp. 321–327.
that Sweden and Finland were not separate entities in a conglomerate state-building exercise.\textsuperscript{205}

This study of time-keeping in the postal system supports Nordin’s interpretation to the extent that it underlines the problems of maintaining communications over the Gulf of Bothnia. However, it also shifts the focus away from collective identities and political culture as constitutive for integration in the Swedish Empire: the postal system brings integration as a consequence of geographical interaction to the forefront, and thus gives primacy to the integrative force of agency in administrative and commercial networks.

In a dissertation on the integration of Gotland in the second half of the seventeenth century, Jens Lerbom shows how the Swedish state succeeded in integrating the island by implementing a fiscal and judicial system that created a direct relationship, and which allowed for participation and negotiation between the state and its subjects. Furthermore, state religion and the church were used to introduce ideological messages – and Swedish as a language. Much of this is concerned with a relationship between subjects and state-representatives on local and regional levels: the central government ruled largely by delegating decision-making to the regional level, and exercised control by auditing the regional finances after the event.\textsuperscript{206} I would claim that in the case of Gotland we see the strong side of the Swedish central administration in Stockholm. It ruled in the same manner as a firm of accountants, and less as stockbrokers immediately reacting to a market. In this, the Swedish control mechanisms paralleled the systems of performance evaluation that the Hudson Bay and East India companies built up to control their agents at their far-flung trading ports, who because of the time-lag in information had a great deal of authority.\textsuperscript{207} Integrating power in Sweden, as elsewhere, was also built on an ideological appeal to locally entrenched world-views. Lutheranism and the rule of law were important ingredients in a kind of civic attitude that in the Swedish Empire also extended to the peasantry.\textsuperscript{208}

What the Swedish Empire lacked was economic integration. Significantly, Lerbom also concludes that Swedish policy on Gotland did not change its economic conditions much. Trade with the Swedish mainland continued to be of minor importance, and this chapter has indicated the difficulties in maintaining sea-mail routes in the absence of commercial links. This was a general problem for postal traffic in the Swedish Empire. The strength of the early modern European postal system was to a large extent built on the joint interests of business and political correspondence, but in the Swedish Empire the two networks did not coincide. This was most detrimental for postal communication overseas,

\textsuperscript{205} Eng 2001, pp. 291–298.
\textsuperscript{206} Lerbom 2003, p. 125, summary pp. 225–232.
\textsuperscript{207} Carlos & Hejeebu 2007, pp. 152–158.
which depended on combining postal deliveries with cargo traffic to keep down its costs. Economic integration was insufficient for a profitable postal service over the Baltic.

The Achilles’ heel of integration – a slow, disruptable service provided by the Post Office – was most likely to be felt at times of stress. In the Great Northern War of 1700–1721, Sweden lost both its Baltic provinces to Russia and its position as a European great power. Michael Roberts has claimed that the loss was a consequence of a strategic mistake on the part of Charles XII: the neglect of the defences of the important Baltic provinces. The king was looking in another direction.209 To define and rank the causes of defeat in a war, with its different agents, their preconditions, and a very complex chain of events, is almost impossible. Nevertheless, I would suggest that the Swedish Empire’s information problems were an important cause. With an information circle lasting two months just for Stockholm–Riga, royal neglect is not entirely surprising. With his repeated warnings before the war, the governor-general in Riga, Erik Dahlbergh, was a lone and very distant voice that caught little attention in Stockholm, and his suggestions to improve the postal route were met by the director general of the Post Office, Samuel Åkerhielm senior, with what the postal historian Teodor Holm has called a ‘tight-fisted book-keeper’s attitude’.210

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209 Roberts 1979, pp. 147–150.
Johan Lange’s Inspection of the Estonian and Livonian Postal Systems, 1687–88

Enn Küng

This chapter offers an overview of the advent of the postal system in Livonia and Estonia in the second quarter of the seventeenth century, followed by a detailed look at the first extensive inspection of the postal systems in the two provinces by Johan Lange, the inspector of the Chancery Board, in 1687 and 1688. The post in Estonia and Livonia in the seventeenth century has attracted the interest of several historians. In their work on Swedish postal history in the seventeenth century, Teodor Holm and Nils Forssell have both touched on the subject of the post in overseas provinces. In his study of the government of Livonia from 1617 to 1634, Ragnar Liljedahl discusses the main aspects of establishing the post in Livonia and Estonia. Julius Bleyer and Elmar Ojaste have written an overview of the postal history of Estonia in the seventeenth century, while Georg Jensch has published an article about the post in Livonia in the same period. Pärsla Pētersone is currently working on the post in Latvia. The author of this chapter has studied the beginnings of the post in Livonia and Estonia in the first half of the seventeenth century.

The postal inspection of 1687–88 has been mentioned in the works of earlier Swedish postal historians, but it has not been summarized or analysed fully. Pētersone, who has studied the importance of the Riga post office in domestic and international networks of postal routes, offers a brief introduction to the data Lange had gathered about Riga. The present author’s is the first complete overview of Lange’s inspection, and is offered for the first time in English here.

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1 This chapter was prepared under the aegis of the Estonian Science Foundation Research Project No. 6945.
2 Holm 1906–1929; Forssell 1936.
3 Liljedahl 1933.
4 Bleyer 1936, pp. 29–74. Bleyer has also published a summary of his research on postal history (Bleyer 1981); Ojaste 1984a; Ojaste 1984b; Jensch 1934, pp. 1–9.
5 Pētersone 1997; Pētersone 2001a; Pētersone 2001b.
8 Pētersone 2001a, pp. 6, 9–10.
9 Küng 2005.
Archive materials for the inspection of 1687–88 are well preserved, and can be found in the Chancery Board archives in the Swedish National Archives.10

The post in Estonia and Livonia

Saturday, 20 February 1636 saw the birth of the Swedish national postal system. On that day, Queen Christina of Sweden issued an eighteen-clause postal ordinance (Förordning om Postbådhen). Domestic post was virtually non-existent in Sweden until 1636 – for several reasons. The peasantry were obliged to convey official letters or letters of national relevance for free, or to provide riding horses for others to do so, and they had to offer lodging and food to such travellers. There were no regular postal deliveries. Although the Swedish Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna had already attempted to develop a state-wide post back in March 1624, he did not succeed.11 Sweden had become a part of the European post in 1620: its main connection to Continental Europe was a route from Stockholm to the border town of Markaryd, and from thence via Denmark to Hamburg, which was then the meeting point with the biggest European postal system, the Imperial Post of the Thurn und Taxis family.12 The problems faced were not only typical of Sweden proper, but were familiar to the central authorities of its provinces of Estonia, Livonia, and Ingria in the first third of the seventeenth century. When in the mid 1620s Oxenstierna initiated reforms to reorganize the existing postal traffic into a regular postal system covering the whole realm, the relevant demands were presented to the nobility of Estonia as well. There were practical reasons for this, in view of the fact that Sweden’s war with Poland for the supremacy of Livonia was not over. Many troops were stationed or regularly passed through the Estonian province, and written orders and money were sent to the garrisons there: help was needed with the deliveries of men as well as post and different parcels. Earlier this would have been the responsibility of the Crown peasants, but by the 1620s three-quarters of farms had been given as fiefs instead.13

We should also bear in mind the Swedish need to reform the administration of its overseas provinces. The military victory over Poland in 1625–26 secured Sweden’s position in the Baltic provinces to the extent that the work of reconstruction could begin. When Gustav II Adolf visited Reval at the beginning of 1626, he proposed several reforms to the nobility of Estonia and Reval’s city council. The reforms were primarily concerned with the security of Estonia and demands that the province bear its own administrative costs, at least during peacetime. Therefore it was necessary to find new sources of financing to

10 Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, Lange’s report, RA.
support the province’s budget (customs duties, subsidies). It was also necessary to carry out a judicial reform, establish new principles for church and school management, reorganize trade flows with Russia, and so on. One of the major problems was the organization and maintenance of state carriage traffic (variously Schüssung, Schüsserei, or skjutsväsende) by the nobility of Estonia. It was directly linked to the king’s demand for the construction and repair of roads and bridges.\textsuperscript{14} Estonia’s neighbouring province Livonia found itself in a similar situation. When Johan Skytte was appointed governor-general of Livonia in 1629, his duties included organizing carriage traffic and establishing post stations.\textsuperscript{15}

The pressure from the central authorities therefore led to the establishment of local posts in Livonia and Estonia. On 20 December 1630, Johan Skytte signed a postal ordinance (\textit{Schüss-Ordnung})\textsuperscript{16} for his province, and on 5 March 1631 the nobility of Estonia published their own postal ordinance (\textit{Postordnung}).\textsuperscript{17} The preamble to the latter mentioned that the nobility’s consent to the ordinance was limited to three roads, leading to Dorpat, Pernau, and Narva. Post stations, with three spare post-horses apiece, had to be opened along those routes. It was also suggested that good inn-keepers should be hired. The post included not only the system of providing inns with the necessary horses, but also the principles of funding. The previous free courier service was replaced by fees, charged by the mile.\textsuperscript{18} The peasants were responsible for the carriage traffic. The regularity of the post was not mentioned in the ordinance. The post was delivered according to the necessity. Basically, with this document, the nobility of Estonia took responsibility for the royal post, but not private mail deliveries, through the province. The same can be said of the postal ordinance for Livonia. The main difference between the two ordinances was the fact that in Livonia the local nobility were not sounded out, and the ordinance there was imposed as a precept of the governorate. An organization for state couriers alone was also established with the new carriage traffic in Livonia. In the case of deliveries of royal post, the courier had to present his passport to the local governor or vicegerent, who then gave him the money to cover his travelling expenses. The governors and vicegerents had to make sure that the post stations along the way provided the necessary horses, fodder for the animals, and food for the travellers.\textsuperscript{19} On 28 September 1631, Skytte published separate carriage traffic regulations for Ingria that called for similar arrangements there and in the county of Kexholm.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{14} Liljedahl 1933, pp. 175–193.
\textsuperscript{15} Liljedahl 1933, p. 278.
\textsuperscript{16} 7349–1–27, LVVA.
\textsuperscript{17} 858–1–223, EAA.
\textsuperscript{18} The calculations are based on the so-called Livonian mile, which was c. 7.4 km. In seventeenth-century sources it was reckoned that three Livonian miles were equivalent to two Swedish miles.
\textsuperscript{19} Küng 2002, pp. 208–212.
\textsuperscript{20} Liljedahl 1933, p 370.
The implementation of these ordinances did not happen overnight, and probably never to the extent that the central government would have wished. On 18 April 1632, Skytte presented a motion to Gustav II Adolf to amend how the carriage traffic was organized. Despite various measures taken to ease the journeys of couriers and carriage traffic, there were too many complaints that the couriers had to wait during their runs, resulting in delays to the post. Skytte therefore came up with a completely new idea. He proposed that the carriage traffic of Livonia and Estonia should be rented out, or in other words placed in private hands.21

On 18 April 1632, Skytte put an interesting proposition to Stockholm. A man named Beauieu had approached him asking to be made responsible for courier mail deliveries in both Livonia and Estonia, which he would finance from his own pocket so that people could travel around in the country for a certain fee. Skytte believed Beauieu to be suitable for this position. In addition, Beauieu had himself proposed that he monitor the royal forests, bridges, and river crossings (in these regions, primarily barges).22 Yet Beauieu’s proposition never came to anything. In the summer of 1632, Jacob Becker was the next person to propose that a similar arrangement, this time partially funded by the city of Riga.23 Among a number of other suggestions – that he publish a newspaper in Riga, and that he become printer to Dorpat University – he proposed defraying the costs of mail and passenger deliveries from overseas provinces to Western Europe and back. Becker’s arrangements were never realized since the towns and provinces did not support him financially. Only Riga city council and its merchants were interested in Becker’s services, making him postmaster of the city, and paying him regularly from the town budget, beginning in 1632. For this reason Becker conducted his business mainly in Riga, and Reval in Estonia and Dorpat in Livonia were not connected to his postal services. The local Swedish authorities did not use his services either; instead they relied on the postal system that the nobility ran.24

The Swedish postal ordinance of 1636 was implemented in Finland, Ingria, Livonia, and Estonia in 1638–39. On 1 February 1638, Oxenstierna reminded the Council of the Realm of the need to establish postal traffic with Finland running via Åland Islands to Åbo and Helsingfors, from where Reval could be reached by sea, and Viborg, Kexholm, and Narva by land. On 2 June 1638, Queen Christina duly issued a warrant to Bernhard Stein von Steinhausen, a nobleman from Ingria, to establish a postal system in Finland, ordering him to appoint post-

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21 Livonica II, vol. 65, RA; see also Liljedahl 1933, pp. 371–372.
22 Livonica II, vol. 65, RA.
masters (postförvalter) in Finnish towns. The next move was for the postal routes from Stockholm to Narva via the Åland Islands and Finland to be set out and described, resulting in a special postal list (postrulla) issued on 7 August 1638. 25

These steps brought the official post via Finland and Ingria to Estonia. The Livonian post was reformed in an ordinance issued by Bengt Oxenstierna on 18 March 1639. 26 As a result, by the end of the 1630s postmasters had been appointed in Narva, Dorpat, and Riga, but Estonia was as yet unconnected to the Swedish postal system, while Reval did not have a postmaster on the state payroll. It was at this point, the late 1630s and early 1640s, that the nobility of Estonia refused to convey the post, and ignored all the demands of the central authorities.

As Livonia and Ingria were linked by a network of post roads, it was inevitable that a link would be set up with the neighbouring province of Estonia. By the beginning of the 1640s, mail from Sweden was taken to Narva at specified times, from where it was forwarded to Dorpat or Riga, and the other way round. In the beginning the mail from Stockholm to Reval also went by Narva; later this route was only used in winter. In 1641 it was suggested that a permanent connection should be established across the Gulf of Finland via the Porkkala headland to Reval. Riga took an interest in the possibility since conveying post to Stockholm via Pernau and Reval was faster. Around 1645 a postal route from Riga via Pernau to Reval was established and used regularly. The Reval postmaster started work in the same year. 27

An important step in the establishment of common postal network in Estonia, Livonia, and Ingria was taken with the appointment of Becker as a postmaster of the governorate of Livonia on 24 May 1645. 28 Becker was given responsibility for keeping the post-horses and conveying the royal post. On 28 January 1648 he was then appointed chief postmaster of the overseas provinces, running the postal traffic from Riga to Åbo. 29 At the end of 1646 the post roads in the governorate of Estonia were changed. Before the post had gone from Dorpat to Narva via Lohusu and Fokenhoff, but that road was abandoned and a new road via Wesenberg was taken into use. Wesenberg was also on the post road from Reval to Narva. The aim of the reorganization was to ensure the post from Reval, Narva, and Dorpat end up together at a given time, namely Wednesday afternoons. 30 This postal system, established by the end of 1640s, continued in the overseas provinces until the end of Swedish rule.

28 Proclamation by the Governor of Livonia Anders Eriksson Hästehufvud, 278–1–XI:1, fos. 3–3v, EAA.
29 7349–1–132, pp. 61–62, Queen Christina to the Governor of Riga Erik Stenbock, Stockholm, 2 May 1648, LVVA.
After establishing, linking, and launching the national post in Estonia, Livonia, and Ingria, it was crucial for the Swedish authorities to harmonize the postal system of its overseas provinces with the similar structures in Sweden–Finland. Essentially this boiled down to time co-ordination, guaranteeing that post moved regularly and smoothly from one end of the country to the other regardless of seasons. High-ranking officials, mainly the governors-general, were obliged to provide the authorities in Stockholm and neighbouring provinces with an overview of events in their administrative area and surrounding areas. Regularity depended on the post days when the post arrived at the provincial capital and was then forwarded on. Nevertheless there were limits to the cooperation between different offices, as a result of which the mail did not arrive on time at the post exchange offices, and transport had to be postponed until the next run. Delays in postal traffic were also caused by bad road conditions, human error, and the like. The governorate officials had to keep an eye on the post offices to guarantee the functioning of the postal system. Sometimes an inspector was sent from Stockholm to the overseas provinces to inspect the state of the post, travelling around the provinces and talking to the authorities and postmasters of the governorate; charting the situation; and finally presenting a report with possible changes that might improve the situation. The most prominent investigation was conducted by Johan Lange, who made an extensive journey through the Baltic provinces. The objective of his mission was to evaluate the postal system there, of which the Chancery Board in Stockholm knew next to nothing.

Johan Lange’s inspection in 1687–88

One of the most extensive postal inspections in Estonia and Livonia was conducted by Johan Lange in 1687–88. The inspection was occasioned by changes in the administration of the postal systems of the provinces. Although the Chancery Board had jurisdiction over the state’s post, it did not get directly involved in the postal management of the provinces; that was essentially left to the officials of the governorate. That changed with the Swedish postal reform of 17 March 1685, which subjected the country’s postal system to the Chancery Board.31 From that moment on, officials at all levels had to work to the guidelines issued by the Chancery Board.32 At the same time, several complaints concerning the post in the provinces reached Stockholm.

Johan Lange’s appointment to inspect the post in Estonia and Livonia in the late autumn of 1687 was directly connected to the 1685 ordinance.33 The instruc-

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31 Holm 1906–1929, iv pt. 1, pp. 102–108, 206; Forssell 1936, i. p. 89; §14 of the royal resolution covers the overseas provinces of Estonia, Livonia, and Ingria, RR, RA.
33 Lange came from Livonia, having been born in Reval in 1650. He worked as a secretary for Count Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie, then came to Stockholm, where he worked as a post
tions given to Lange by the Chancery Board on 15 November 1687 also refer to a royal decree, and go on to name the same intractable problems that Charles XI wanted the Chancery Board to solve: the introduction of postal traffic between various places in the country and the capital; the timely delivery of the post; appropriate postal rates and other charges; the sparing use of funds; the end of the misuse of free postage; and so on.34

As can be seen from the preamble to Lange’s instructions, the Chancery Board had hoped for an overview of the administration and revenue of Estonia’s and Livonia’s postal service back in 1669, without result. After the ordinance of 1685, the relevant regulation calling for the documentation of the postal system’s cash revenues and administration costs had been sent to the overseas provinces’ postmasters, Statius Stein in Riga and Adam Leutner in Reval. However, according to the Chancery Board the postmasters had not followed the order satisfactorily, and had only returned the barest of accounts, without the supporting documents requested. Neither had they made any proposals for cutting costs and improving the postal system. Since the extra appropriations from the national budget were too large, the Chancery Board was convinced that the postal revenue in Estonia and Livonia was not being used efficiently. The Chancery Board announced that Lange was being sent to the post offices of Estonia and Livonia because of ambiguities in the use of funds there. Lange’s main responsibility was to reorganize the work of the post offices along Swedish lines.35

According to his instructions, Lange was to start his inspection in Reval (§ 1) and from there visit all the main post offices in Estonia and Livonia. He had to inform the governor-general or the highest local official of his visit, present his credentials from the Chancery Board, and explain his instructions (§ 2). The credentials had to be presented to all the postmasters as well, and then according to the importance of the post offices, Lange had to stay there for one to three weeks. During that time he had to collect the money collected in postage and keep it locked in a chest with two padlocks, of which he had the one key and the local postmaster the other. All the letters had to be registered, and the work in offices had to adhere to the written guidelines (§ 3). Lange also had to see whether it was possible to apply the rules and regulations for Swedish postmasters in the provinces, bearing in mind local peculiarities (for example, the use of postilions instead of post-farmers), and to formulate appropriate instructions for the provinces’ postmasters and present them to the Chancery Board (§ 4).

Free letters caused problems when it came to collecting postage. Lange had to make sure that the directives on free letters were strictly followed and no other

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34 Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, Lange’s instructions of 15 November 1687, RA. By mistake the royal instructions of 17 March 1685 carry the date 12 March.
35 Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, RA.
letters were registered as such. The only possible free letter was one that concerned state affairs.\textsuperscript{36} In order to restrict the number of people who were entitled to send letters free of charge, Lange and the governors-general had to establish who those officials were and issue them with books under the seal of the governor-general that gave them free postage up to a certain sum (§ 5).

The instructions given to Lange also describe the powers of the postmasters. According to a Swedish tradition, the postmasters would be expected to swear an oath before Lange. After that the Chancery Board would confirm the postmasters’ remit (§ 6). For every post office Lange had to determine its costs and salaries, and the postmasters’ additional income, and decide whether the work in some offices was more difficult than in others, and include that in his report (§ 7). The report should include each post office’s income from other state funds as well (§ 8). In addition Lange had to observe how the post was carried between towns, and what costs the postilions entailed. The aim was to find out whether it was possible to reduce the state’s costs for their maintenance and enter into a more efficient agreement with them. But this was not allowed without the approval of the governor-general in order to guarantee that the people involved in the deliveries were not pushed aside without reason (§ 9). Lange had to make himself familiar with the network of post roads to find out whether there were better, quicker roads that the post should take (§ 10). He was to note down the mileage between towns (§ 12) and the postal tariffs in different places (§ 11).

A somewhat more difficult task was to investigate a dispute between the postmasters of Riga and Moscow, and find out whether Russian letters were carried to Riga via Dorpat or Pechory.\textsuperscript{37} This called for consultations with the governor-general of Livonia, Jakob Johan Hastfer (§ 13). The connection between Reval and Stockholm was no less important, whether directly across the sea or from Reval to the Porkkala headland and on via Åbo and the Åland Islands to the capital. The Chancery Board wanted a post-ship to be used on either postal route, with a second to be added later. In this question Lange was to consult the Estonian governor-general and vicegerent (§ 14). Lange made the Reval postmaster add a passport to the post going to Porkkala in which to record how long had the post remained in Reval, when it had been sent on, whether there had been any difficulties, and if so, why. The postmaster at Porkkala had to register the arrival and forwarding times of the post and any possible complications (§ 15).

Lange was given a manservant to accompany him and 2 dr sm for his daily expenses, starting the day he left Stockholm. The Chancery Board also promised to cover his travelling expenses (costs for horses and carriages, as well as freight).

\footnote{During Lange’s inspection a free letter-conveyance order of 23 December 1685, signed by Charles XI, was in force (1–2–757, fos. 16–17v, LVVA); for the free letters, see Olsson 2006; and Olsson 2007.}

\footnote{See Küng 2009b. for the Riga–Moscow postal traffic and the dispute that started in 1680.}
Lange received his first payment, 120 dr sm, from the Stockholm post office. The inspector’s correspondence was also free of charge (§ 17).

Lange’s postal inspection of Livonia and Estonia can be reconstructed from his final report and its twenty-five appendices, presented in Stockholm on 18 March 1688. Lange’s itinerary was as follows. He left Stockholm on a post-ship on 23 November 1687 and arrived at Reval on 9 December; on 12–13 December he observed the work of a local post office. He then travelled via Hapsal to Pernau, where he studied the work of a post office for 8 days, compiling a report on 14 January. For about three weeks, from 19 January to 6 February, Lange was in Riga; then he spent a fortnight in Dorpat, leaving on 18 February for Wesenberg together with the post and arriving there the next day, where he stayed for one day only. From Wesenberg he travelled via Narva, Viborg, Borgå, Helsingfors, Åbo, and the Åland Islands to Stockholm, where he arrived on 10 March. Lange did not inspect the post offices of Wolmar, Wenden, Walk, and Hapsal since he deemed the volume of correspondence and revenues there to be insignificant. The postmasters of Reval, Pernau, and Dorpat had been appointed by Stein, and were accountable to him personally. The postmaster of Hapsal, whose post office was located on a private estate, had received his remit from Count Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie, so he too could not be investigated by Lange.

The post offices that Lange visited are discussed here in order of importance, with the key problems that Lange observed there. He gave the post offices the following general evaluation:

The ways in which one office has more effort and work to do than the next can best be recognized with the help of the special accounts for the respective offices. Of all of them, the post office in Riga has the highest revenues, which is why this office also has a great deal of work to do on all days of the week, like the one in Stockholm. Reval, on the contrary, has not half the income, especially with regard to the foreign post. In Riga, the foreign post from Königsberg by way of Courland arrives and leaves twice a week. From there the letters are distributed to all cities in Livonia and Estonia including Narva … and the post office in Dorpat has revenues that are four times as great than those in Pernau and has in all respects more duties, worries, and expenses than the one in Pernau.

Thus the most important post office was in Riga. Riga was not only the main administrative, military, and economic centre in the Baltic provinces, its history had left it sited at the heart of the road network; in addition, it was a node in the postal administration. As already noted, in 1645 the Riga postmaster Becker had been appointed director of Livonian governorate’s post, and in 1648 he had

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38 Kanslikollegium, G II f: 1, Lange’s report of 15 March 1688, RA.
39 Kanslikollegium, G II f: 1, RA.
become the chief postmaster of the overseas provinces, co-ordinating post from Riga to Åbo. Since the beginning of 1688 this post had been held by Becker’s son-in-law Statius Stein.

While taking in the situation at Riga post office, Lange discovered several violations of the postal ordinances. For example, with every delivery – twice a week, in other words – the merchants of Riga as well as some royal officials received large packets of newspapers (avis-pacqueter) from Königsberg, weighing 32 lod (0.425 kilos). Lange believed that such parcels were chargeable. According to Lange, the man who had the right to bring newspapers into the city free of charge was the assessor of the Riga Burggericht (castle court) Georg Ruvius, who had the permission of the governor-general Christer Horn, allowing him to take abstracts from foreign newspapers, print them in Riga, and then distribute them all over the country free of charge. After Ruvius’s death, the printing and distribution of announcements became his widow’s responsibility. According to Lange it was not only the newspapers that were conveyed free of charge, but also private letters.

Lange also mentioned a couple of hundred packages containing gold and ducats that had arrived in Riga during the winter. The merchants of Riga needed precious metals and ducats to do business with Russia and Poland, where hardly any other currencies were accepted; the solution they had hit upon was for their business partners to send them ducats from the Dutch Republic. The problem was that up to that point money sent in this way did not pay postage; if it did, the packages would instead be sent – free – to Mitau with the Courland post, from where they would be conveyed to Riga by express. Lange was afraid that not only remittances but also private letters would start to go via Courland. At the same time, he only described the situation without offering a solution to the problem of carrying newspapers, gold, and remittances. He knew that the merchants were ready to pay a certain amount of money to the post office for the packages with gold, since they were more than a little interested in receiving them.

The Riga post office had the largest revenues as well as the largest appropriations from the state budget. From the so-called ‘budgetary means’ of Livonia, the Riga post office received 1,350 dr sm per annum, intended to cover the postmaster’s salary and administrative costs of the post. However this funding was

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43 Becker was postmaster in Riga until his death in 1672, when his widow Margareta Giese took over the post. After her death in 1688 their son-in-law Statius Stein became postmaster, but the Chancery Board excluded him from office in 1692 (Jensch 1934, pp. 8–9).
44 A Königsberg newspaper, König. Donnerstags (Sonntags) Ordinari Post-Zeitung, was popular at that time in Riga (Annu 1993, p. 425).
45 Georg Ruvius (Langel Ruftig) was in effect the censor in the governorate (see Annu 1993, p. 425).
46 In the Livonian governor-general’s accounts of 1685, for example, 1,343 dr sm 8 rst was allocated for the postmaster’s salary from the budget for Riga. At the same time the post office had not received 19,136 dr sm 12 9/10 rst for previous years (278–1–XXII:53, pp. 58–59,
insufficient to run the entire postal system in Riga, and the deficit was covered by postage.

According to the report signed by Lange and Stein, the Riga postmaster, which detailed the arrival and dispatch of both free and chargeable letters at the Riga post office, free letters had cost the state 49 rdr 49 rst in Riga in the course of three winter weeks, while chargeable letters paid for in cash drew in 215 rdr 52 rst.47 Lange and Stein estimated the free letters cost 792 dr sm 22 rst, and chargeable letters brought in 3,449 dr sm 7 rst in the course of six winter months. For six summer months the estimate for free letters was again 792 dr sm 22 rst, but since many letters that otherwise would have required postage were sent independently by ship, the estimates reached only half of that of winter, namely 1,724 dr sm 19 rst. The total estimate of the revenue from free and chargeable letters together was 6,759 dr sm 6 rst, although in actual fact the post office only received the postage paid in cash (5,173 dr sm 26 rst) and 1,350 dr sm from the budget of Livonia, a total of 6,523 dr sm 26 rst.48

Table 3.1 The number of letters arriving in Riga from abroad, by date of arrival.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>So-called German post</th>
<th>Königsberg and Memel</th>
<th>Wilna</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
<th>Hamburg</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17 Jan.</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Jan.</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Jan.</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Jan.</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Feb.</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Feb.</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1: Lange’s report, RA.

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47 1 riksdaler (rdr) was 2 dalar silvermynt (dr sm) or 64 silver öre; runstyck was equivalent of öre sm. 48 Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, Lange’s draft budget for Livonia and Estonia, RA.

EAA). The stated debt had increased gradually since the beginning of 1660s. In 1687 the post office was allocated 1,201 dr sm 16 rst from the budget for Riga, but the loan remained the same (278–1–XXII:54, pp. 59–60, EAA).
Table 3.2. Number of chargeable letters sent from Riga, by date of departure and destination.

| Date       | Dorpat | Narva | Reval | Nyen | Pernau | Wesenberg | Hapsal | Arensburg | Wolmar | Stockholm | Helsingfors | Viborg | Vasa | Ábo | Uleåborg | Tavastehus | Moscow | Pskov | Novgorod | Amsterdam | Lübeck | Hamburg | Königsberg | Stralsund | Demmin | Rostock | Flensburg | Stettin | Wismar | Wittenberg | “German letters” | Danzig | Memel | Libau | Mitau | Goldingen | Wilna | Norway | Total |
|------------|--------|-------|-------|------|--------|-----------|--------|-----------|--------|-----------|------------|--------|------|-----|---------|-----------|--------|-------|----------|-----------|--------|--------|-----------|----------|--------|--------|--------|-------|----------|------|--------|--------|
| 19 Jan.    | 76     | –     | –     | 8    | –      | 2         | –      | –         | 7       | –         | 23         | 3      | 1    | 4   | 1       | –         | 22     | 8      | –        | 34        | 19     | 19     | 11       | –        | 12     | 10     | –       | –       | –       | 33     | –      | 323     |
| 22 Jan.    | –      | –     | –     | 38    | –      | –         | 1      | –         | –       | –         | 23         | –      | –    | 2   | –       | –         | –      | –      | 10       | 11        | 7      | 9      | 6        | –        | –       | –      | 50      | 114     |
| 23 Jan.    | –      | –     | 74    | –     | –      | 2         | –      | –         | 10      | –         | 50         | 1      | –    | 2   | –       | –         | –      | 6      | –        | 11        | –      | –      | 14       | –        | –       | –      | –       | 294     |
| 26 Jan.    | –      | –     | –     | –     | –      | 2         | –      | –         | 83      | –         | 18         | 1      | –    | 1   | –       | –         | –      | –      | 14       | 8         | 22     | 9      | 3        | –        | –       | –      | –       | 46      |
| 29 Jan.    | –      | –     | –     | –     | –      | 4         | –      | 1         | –       | –         | 18         | 1      | –    | 1   | –       | –         | –      | –      | 46       | 8         | 9      | 257    | 46       | –        | 32      | 1      | 116     |
| 30 Jan.    | –      | –     | –     | –     | –      | 6         | –      | 1         | –       | –         | 14         | 1      | –    | 1   | –       | –         | –      | –      | 14       | 8         | 2      | 51     | 46       | –        | 126     | –      | 126     |
| 2 Feb.     | –      | –     | –     | –     | –      | 8         | –      | 1         | –       | –         | 20         | 1      | –    | 1   | –       | –         | –      | –      | 114      | 294       | 9      | –      | 116      | –        | 51      | –      | 116     |
| 5 Feb.     | –      | –     | –     | –     | –      | 3         | –      | 1         | –       | –         | 16         | 1      | –    | 1   | –       | –         | –      | –      | 16       | 9         | –      | –      | 126      | –        | –       | –      | 126     |
| 6 Feb.     | –      | –     | –     | –     | –      | 2         | –      | 1         | –       | –         | 22         | 1      | –    | 1   | –       | –         | –      | –      | 22       | 5         | –      | –      | 51       | –        | –       | –      | –       |
|            |        |       |       |       |        |           |        |           |         |           |             |        |      |     |         |             |        |        |          |           |        |        |          |         |         |        |        |
| Source: Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1: Lange’s report, RA.
Table 3.3 Letters sent gratis by the Chancery Board of the Livonian governor-general plus newspapers (avisers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Stockholm</th>
<th>Dorpat</th>
<th>Reval</th>
<th>Narva</th>
<th>Arensburg</th>
<th>Pernau</th>
<th>Wolmar</th>
<th>Wesenberg</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 Jan.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Jan.</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Jan.</td>
<td>6 + 10 avi</td>
<td>25 + 9 avi</td>
<td>1 + 6 avi</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1 + 1 avi</td>
<td>1 + 4 avi</td>
<td>4 avi</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>32 + 26 avi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Jan.</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5 + 11 avi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Feb.</td>
<td>6 + 14 avi</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>23 + 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Feb.</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>21 + 12 avi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1: Lange’s report, RA.

The tables indicate the data compiled by Stein and his assistant Arendt Jacobsen on 8 February 1688. Domestic post is not given in Table 3.1 (letters arriving in Riga) since their postage had already been paid at their point of origin, but it is possible to follow the arrival of foreign or German post. Geographical notions such as ‘German’ and ‘from Königsberg and Memel’ could indicate post arriving from all across Western Europe. Polish post probably arrived from Wilna. At first glance, it is rather peculiar that Russian towns like Moscow, Novgorod, and Pskov are not indicated under incoming foreign letters, although they are represented in the table of letters sent from Riga. There is a note in the report that Russian letters did not have fixed rates, since Russian correspondence was free of charge, even in the case of packages. At the same time the Russian postmaster charged extraordinarily high rates for delivery: he asked for a quarter of a riksdaler for a letter to Pskov and one riksdaler for a letter to Moscow, and charged postage on the letters sent to Riga.

The letters going out of Riga clearly went in two main directions; either ‘northbound’ to towns in Sweden, Finland, Estonia, and Livonia; or ‘westbound’ to towns in Courland, Germany, the Dutch Republic, and Poland. Reval, the capital of the neighbouring province of Estonia; Riga’s court of appeal and consistory; the garrison towns of Dorpat and Pernau; Narva, the capital of Ingria; and Stockholm are the destinations most often mentioned in the case of domestic post. Yet it has to be kept in mind that not all the post leaving Riga was what was called ‘clean’ Riga post, since it included letters travelling to their destination via Riga: for example, of 79 letters sent from Riga to Reval on 23 January, 31 had originated in Germany; of 38 letters sent to Narva on 26 January, 16 were ‘Ger-

49 Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, RA. Pētersone 2001, pp. 6, 9–10, notes Stein and Jacobsen’s 8 February 1688 report to Lange.
50 At that time the postal contract of 12 August 1686 between the Riga (Margareta Giese) and Moscow (Andreas Winius) postmasters was in force, by which Winius had to pay Giese 290 rdr for postal traffic by horse between Riga and Pskov. Giese was not allowed to charge extra postage for the letters and parcels. The Riga post office received 9 groschen for a lod of Russian post travelling between Mitau and Riga (Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, RA; see also Küng 2009b).
man letters’ going via Riga. Amsterdam stands out among the destinations in Western Europe, which can easily be explained by the central role the Dutch Republic played in Riga’s commerce. For similar reasons Hamburg, Lübeck, Königsberg, and Danzig were important in the postal traffic. Mitau, the capital of Courland, was also important, as were the towns in Russia. These statistics do not show diplomatic post, of course, which instead went by special courier if needed.

Free letters from Riga were mostly destined for Stockholm, but also for Dorpat, Pernau, and Reval, and in addition to the letters there was the onward dispatch of newspapers already noted above. The volume of correspondence sent by the governor-general was generated in part by his immediate duties, but also by the need to answer inquiries from various institutions and petitions from the general populace. The right to send letters gratis from the Riga post office was held by the Royal Customs Office; Licence Manager Werner Witte; Secretary Hagemeister; Commissar of State Jonas Klingstedt; Chamberlain Paul Strokirch; Licence Cashier Jochim Ahrens; Assistant Councillor Chr. Gertner von Gertenberg; Chamberlain Wagner; Secretary Johan Jonsson; Fortification Cashier Johan von Wickeden; Bursary Officer (räntmästare) Cordt Langhaar; Secretary Michael Strokirch; General Superintendent Johann Fischer and the Royal Consistory; Inspector Langreen; the clerks of port customs; Colonel and Commandant Budberg; Colonel Thumb von Weingast; and Inspector Lange himself: some twenty people or institutions.

The second most important post office in the overseas provinces was in Reval, an office almost devoid of international connections of moment. Yet Reval was an important link between the provinces and Sweden proper, while since the 1640s most of the post from Livonia and Riga travelled by way of Pernau or Dorpat first to Reval, then across the sea to Porkkala, and thence to Stockholm. During winter the Riga post went via Dorpat, Wesenberg, and Narva to Finland, from where it either was conveyed through the Åland Islands or went around the Gulf of Bothnia to Stockholm. Reval’s overland contacts with the outside world depended on the Riga post office. Only during the navigation season were private letters sent by sea directly to Western Europe. Unlike Riga, Narva, or Dorpat, the state-funded postmaster in Reval was appointed later, in the middle of the 1640s. In 1688 the post was held by Adam Leutner.

The turnover at the Reval post office was much smaller than that of Riga. According to Lange it was less than half. Every year the Reval post office was allocated 800 dr sm from the state budget. According to Lange’s financial report,
the cost of free letters at Reval post office during three weeks of December came to an estimated 65 dr sm 22 rst, while 89 dr sm 11 rst in cash was paid for postage. For the six winter months this gave 591 dr sm 6 rst for free letters and 804 dr sm 3 rst for chargeable letters – a total of 1,395 dr sm 9 rst. The total estimate for the summer months (697 dr sm 20½ rst) was only half as much as the winter, since some of the letters went out by ship. The estimates for a year were therefore 2,092 dr sm 29½ rst (886 dr sm 25 rst for free letters and 1,206 dr sm 4½ rst for chargeable letters). According to Lange’s calculations, the post office received 1,206 dr sm 4½ rst in cash and 800 dr sm from the budget of Estonia, giving a total of 2,006 dr sm 4 rst. He suggested keeping these totals. His calculations are interesting since in the case of Riga, Lange reckoned the cost of dispatching free letters remained the same, winter and summer, but in Reval he thought half the free letters were forwarded as paid sea-mail, without stopping at the post office.

Unlike Riga, the incoming post to Reval was not registered during Lange’s inspection because Estonia had no foreign borders. Any private letters that came by sea were conveyed to their destinations by the merchants that had carried them. That said, the addressees of chargeable letters and free letters from the Chancery Board of the governor-general forwarded from Reval are included in Leutner’s report.55

Table 3.4 Chargeable letters sent from Reval, by date of departure and destination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Riga</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pernau</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arensburg</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narva</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorpat</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wesenberg</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Åbo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helsingfors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viborg</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyen</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borgå</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Königsberg</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamburg</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lübeck</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters to be forwarded</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1: Lange’s report, RA.

2–829, pp. 81, 90, EAA). These funds had been at the disposal of Reval’s postmaster since 1659 (1–2–791, EAA).

54 Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, Lange’s draft budget for Livonia and Estonia, RA.

55 Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, A. Leutner’s report to Lange, 4 January 1688, RA.
Table 3.5 Free letters sent by the Chancery Board of the Estonian governor-general, by date and destination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riga</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lübeck</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narva</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1: Lange’s report, RA.

Forwarded letters were indicated separately among the outgoing post from Reval because they were probably not posted in Reval but had arrived there from other post offices. In his report, Leutner a couple of times indicates where such letters were headed – for example, on 15 December, 1 letter was sent to Königsberg, 1 to Amsterdam, 1 to Hamburg, and 2 to Lübeck – but he did not mention it every time. On 22 December, 7 letters were forwarded; on 24 December an additional note says that 11 letters from Riga were forwarded. The main destination for free letters from the Chancery Board of the governor-general was Stockholm. The right to send letters free of charge was exercised at the Reval post office by the royal port customs; the royal customs office; the commission for the restitution of alienated estates; the royal inland revenue office; the fortifications office; and inspector Lange. There were far fewer people to send free letters from Reval than from Riga.

Dorpat acquired a post office as part of the Riga–Narva route in 1639. The Livonian governor-general Bengt Oxenstierna wanted Dorpat to become the residence of a chief postmaster, but this was not to be, and in 1688 the turnover of Dorpat post office was rather modest. In 1688 Andreas Max worked as the postmaster there.

Unlike Riga and Reval, Dorpat post office did not have its own budget, so its administrative costs and the postmaster’s salary were allocated from the budget of Riga’s chief postmaster. According to Lange’s report, in the space of a fortnight (6–18 February) Dorpat post office saw free letters worth 16 dr sm 21 rst and chargeable letters worth 27 dr sm 24 rst, giving a total of 44 dr sm 13 rst. Lange calculated that free letters were worth 399 dr sm 24 rst a year, but since he believed that for half of the year there was not much postal traffic in Dorpat to speak of, he arrived at 40 dr sm a month (480 dr sm a year) as its estimated turnover. The overall estimated turnover at the post office was 879 dr sm 24 rst. Of the 480 dr sm a month, 420 dr sm went in salaries and the costs of delivering the post. Lange believed that the remaining 69 dr sm could be saved.56

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56 Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, Lange’s draft budget for Livonia and Estonia, RA.
Table 3.6 Chargeable letters sent from Dorpat, by date and destination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Riga</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reval</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pernau</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narva</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wesenberg</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arensburg</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolmar</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Åbo</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wekelax</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jönköping</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>55</strong></td>
<td><strong>70</strong></td>
<td><strong>124</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Andreas Max’s report to Lange, 18 February 1688, Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, RA.

During Lange’s stay in Dorpat, the post was dispatched three times. As can be seen in Table 3.6, the post in Dorpat was domestic. It is possible that post going from Dorpat to Germany and other foreign countries was put into the mailbags going to Riga, which would explain Riga’s prominence in these figures. Other important destinations for the Dorpat post were Reval, Narva, Wolmar, and Stockholm. The right to free letters was exercised at Dorpat post office by the court of appeal (during the inspection period 11 letters were sent to Riga, 11 to Stockholm, and 3 letters to Arensburg at its behest); the royal provincial court; Landeshauptmann (governor) Otto Reinhold Taube; and Proviantmeister (master victualler) Wilhelm Silents.

Pernau post office was opened in the mid 1640s when Riga post was sent to Stockholm via Reval.57 In 1688 the Pernau postmaster was Lorentz Hinrichsen. According to inspector Lange’s and the postmaster’s report, during 8 days Pernau post office received free letters worth 2:17 dr sm and letters paid for in cash worth 3:27 dr sm. It would make 191:16 dr sm for free letters yearly and 184:16 dr sm for taxed letters. But since during summer months most letters were sent out of Pernau by boats, Lange decreased both sums to 140 and 121:16 dr sm. Since the actual monetary income was 140 dr sm, the inspector left 88 dr sm for salaries. He believed that 52 dr sm could have been saved.58

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57 In 1644, while planning a postal route from Riga to Reval via Pernau, the Livonian governor-general Anders Eriksson Hästehuvud offered Count Arendt Eckhof’s residence as the place where the post could foregather (1–2–170, fo. 117v, EAA). Hans Bohnsack was the postmaster of Pernau from 1645.

58 Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, Lange’s draft budget for Livonia and Estonia, RA.
Table 3.7 Taxed letters sent from Pernau, by date and destination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>10 Jan.</th>
<th>13 Jan.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Riga</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forwarded from Riga</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reval</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorpat</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narva</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arensburg</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Lorentz Hinrichsen’s report to Lange, 14 January 1688, Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, RA.

There is too little data available to assess the geographical aspects of Pernau post office. Lange stayed in Pernau for eight days that included two post dispatches. Riga emerges clearly as the main destination but it can be assumed that many forwarded letters were put among letters going to Riga. The free letter right in the Pernau post office was exercised by Colonel and Commandant E. Pistohlkors, Licence Inspector Müller, Proviantmeister P. Krankenhagen and Artillery Lieutenant von Reenson.

Wesenberg post office started work at the end of 1646, when the town became a central point on the postal routes leading to Reval, Narva, and Dorpat. The importance of post of local origin was minimal; instead Wesenberg’s main role was as a forwarding station for post for other towns. In 1688 Bartol Sprint worked as a postmaster in Wesenberg. According to Lange, Wesenberg post office took in 1 dr sm 14 rst a week, amounting to 69 dr sm per annum.59

Table 3.8 Chargeable letters sent from Wesenberg, 19 Feb. 1688, by destination.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Riga</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reval</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorpat</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narva</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Åbo</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bartol Sprint’s report to Lange, 19 January 1688, Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, RA.

Unfortunately, the records only indicate the local post and not the mailbags in transit. Some sense of the quantities involved can be gleaned from Table 3.4, which gives the number of letters sent from Reval to Narva via Wesenberg, but since the postage was already paid, Wesenberg received no income. The letters sent from Riga and Dorpat to Narva and from Dorpat to Reval also came to Wesenberg. Wesenberg’s importance as a node on these postal routes grew in

59 Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, Lange’s draft budget for Livonia and Estonia, RA.
the autumn and winter when it became difficult to cross the Gulf of Finland and the Åland Sea. Reval’s post to Sweden and Finland also went first to Wesenberg and on to Narva and Viborg, where the so-called north route started.

Considering the volume of post and turnover in all five towns, it is unclear whether adequate generalizations can be made about a longer periods of time. In Riga, Lange referred to its competition with the Mitau post office; competition was also felt in all the ports during the navigation period in summer, when letters could be sent direct with departing ships; while some sources also claimed that post was given to coachmen and passengers travelling between towns, although this was deplored by the authorities. Post office turnover depended on the amount of economic activity, but the amount of mail was influenced by other factors as well. Lange mentioned that during his three weeks inspecting the Reval post office, the last week’s incomes were the smallest since it saw a series of holidays. Whatever the reason, the incomes of post offices were thought to show plenty of room for cost-cutting. As Lange mentioned in one of his memorandum to the Livonian governor-general ‘the postal costs in this country were much higher than in Sweden, and what is more, the post is often delayed and is delivered slowly’.

Therefore a reduction in the costs of postal traffic was connected to the issue of faster services. Postal traffic overland from Reval to Riga and thence to Dorpat and Wesenberg, and post deliveries across the Gulf of Finland were of increasing interest. Lange also studied the postal traffic from Riga via Memel to Central and Western Europe and from Riga to Russia.

The inspector was convinced that existing postal routes did not need to be changed. He wrote in his report that ‘there hardly can be more convenient roads than the ones between the cities’. The speed of the post depended first and foremost on the time taken for the mailbags to be dispatched from their starting-point, whether it was possible to exchange bags at a fixed time, or whether the forwarding process had to be delayed to wait for late deliveries. Back in 1676 the royal chancery advisor Jonas Klingstedt, by order of Charles XI, had required the postmasters in Reval and Riga to deliver the post between specified towns in two days. At that time deliveries often took six days. By 1688 the situation had not changed. Although the post was supposed to leave Riga at 8 p.m. on Monday morning, the actual process started only at 5 or 6 p.m. Thus, instead of Wednesday, the post arrived in Reval at 8 a.m. on Thursday morning, having taken 62 hours. The post from Reval to Riga was even slower. It left Reval at 6 p.m. on Thursday and reached its destination on Sunday afternoon, after 66 hours.

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60 Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, Lange to the Chancery Board, Reval, 5 January 1688, RA.
61 Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1. Lange to the Livonian governor-general J. J. Hastfer in Riga, 31 January 1688, RA.
62 Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, Lange’s report, 15 March 1688, §10, RA.
63 Moscovitica, vol. 93, J. Klingstedt to Charles XI, Reval, 16 April 1676, RA.
When Lange made his observations it was against the background of well-maintained roads, and he reckoned that poor road conditions and tired horses would slow the process down even more.\textsuperscript{64}

Lange mentioned other shortcomings in both postal management and the work of couriers. For example, the speed of postal traffic depended largely on whether postal couriers could change horses along the way, or whether they had to turn off a mile or even two from the road. He had also noticed that some of those responsible for maintaining the roads (for example the widow and sons of district magistrate Budberg on the Riga–Dorpat route) gave couriers parcels and errands that caused delays.\textsuperscript{65} But the vicegerent of Estonia Adolf Tungel was convinced that it was the second-rate work of the Riga postmaster and his staff that slowed the post.\textsuperscript{66} It was necessary to reorganize the work of the couriers.

In the 1630s the nobility of Estonia and Livonia were responsible for deliveries of the royal mail in the provinces, but in the mid 1640s this was changed to a postal system, with postmasters located in geographical centres responsible for deliveries. It meant that the Riga and Reval postmasters hired someone to manage each section of the postal route, who in turn hired postilions. Thus, Jonas Klingstedt as Court and Chancery Secretary had signed a contract for deliveries in his district with Magnus Johan Dryander, the assessor and overseer of Waddemois manor, who became responsible for postal deliveries between Pernau and Waddemois inn (9 Livonian miles\textsuperscript{67}). The next stretch of road, between Waddemois and Reval (7 Livonian miles), was the responsibility of Reval’s postmaster, Leutner.\textsuperscript{68} He also had a contract for postal deliveries between Reval to Wesenberg (14 Livonian miles). As in 1688, the Riga postmaster had signed contracts for his district for the delivery of the post between Riga and Salacgrīva (15 Livonian miles) with Marten Nyman; from there to Pernau with one Beyer, leaseholder of Tackeror; from Riga to Dorpat (33 Livonian miles) with the widow and sons of district magistrate Budberg; and

\textsuperscript{64} Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, RA, Lange’s report to Estonian vicegerent Adolf Tungel, Reval, 30 December 1687 and Riga, 30 January 1688; Lange to the Livonian governor-general J. J. Hastfer, Riga, 31 January 1688.

\textsuperscript{65} Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, Lange’s report, 15 March 1688, §10, RA.

\textsuperscript{66} Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, vicegerent A. Tungel to Lange, Reval, 4 January 1688, RA.

\textsuperscript{67} See footnote 18.

\textsuperscript{68} According to the contract Dryander had to (i) have a good and trusted postilion to convey post between Pernau and the Waddemois inn once a week; (ii) have as many horses as necessary to convey the post, together with saddles and everything else necessary; (iii) make sure that it took no more than eleven hours for the post to be conveyed between Pernau and the Waddemois inn, but after road repairs he was to decrease the time to ten hours; and (iv) make sure that the time was always noted down both in the case of letters from Reval reaching the Waddemois inn to be forwarded to Pernau, and in the case of Riga letters received and handed to the Waddemois inn and so on to the servant of the Reval postmaster (1–2–807, fo. 189, EAA); the same contract together with a contract signed with A. Leutner, Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, An announcement by the Estonian governor-general A. Torstensson and J. Klingstedt in Reval on 13 April 1676. RA.
from Dorpat to Wesenberg (15 Livonian miles) with the Dorpat postmaster Andreas Max. Those providing the service were allocated 1,692 dr sm from the state budget every year (600 dr sm for Estonia; 1,092 dr sm for Livonia).

In order to improve matters, Lange consulted, among others, the representative of the Estonian nobility, Landrat (councillor) Hans Heinrich von Tiesenhausen. Rather surprisingly they discussed a return to the principles of the postal ordinances of the 1630s. Von Tiesenhausen supported the idea that innkeepers, tenants, and noblemen who lived along the routes should take responsibility for postal deliveries, switching every two Livonian miles, in return for 4 silver rst for every mile. He wanted these postal tariffs to be approved and paid out in a timely fashion – quarterly, perhaps. He described the current practice of paying the 800 dr sm allocated for the postal management of Estonia (including the postmaster’s salary) only once, at the end of the year. In 1676 Klingstedt had also recommended involving the nobility and inn-keepers living close to the postal routes.69

The rate of 4 silver rst per mile also squared with demands for savings. According to Lange’s calculations, the total distance Reval–Riga–Dorpat–Wesenberg–Reval was 204 Livonian miles, which at 4 silver rst per mile came to 25 dr sm 16 rst per week and 1,326 dr sm per annum: a potential saving of 366 dr sm on the then total of 1,692 dr sm allocated for the management of post. Lange considered 4 silver rst per mile a reasonable cost. He mentioned Andreas Max the Dorpat postmaster, who was ready to take on responsibility for 15 miles in all directions. He also believed that peasants on the Crown estates should be employed in postal traffic, becoming post-farmers as in Sweden, with the added incentive for the Crown of charging 4 silver rst per Swedish mile for the privilege, which would have increased its savings even more.70

No firm conclusions were reached about postal traffic. The main purpose had been to investigate the provincial post and describe possible changes to the postmasters’ remuneration – in other words to save money on behalf of the Chancery Board. It was decided to let the next Diet (Landtag) decide whether providing postal services should become the responsibility of the nobility, the tenants, or the innkeepers. Lange may have begun to favour von Tiesenhausen’s idea when travelling through Pernau en route to Riga from Reval. On his way he tried to meet the nobility and tenants who had signed contracts to provide postal services. It transpired that they did not live anywhere near the roads, and when the inspector went looking for them, he got the impression from their manors and residences that they were spending the money on themselves rather than on postal arrangements. What is more, he never managed to meet the people who actually conveyed the post.71

69 Moscovitica, vol. 93, J. Klingstedt to Charles XI from Reval on 16 April 1676, RA.
70 Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, Lange’s report about conveyance of post and costs, annex Lit: L, RA.
71 Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, Lange to vicegerent Tungel, Riga, 30 January 1688, RA.
Another important postal route that needed reorganizing ran from Reval across the sea to Finland and Sweden. Post was probably already being sent by boat from Reval via the Porkkala headland to Stockholm in the second part of the sixteenth century. It is certainly recorded in the 1620s. According to some estimates, the sea-route was not used regularly; perhaps only seven or eight times a year. While meeting the vicegerent of Reval, Adolf Tungel, Lange tried to sound him out about establishing a sea-route either directly from Reval to Stockholm or via the Porkkala headland. Tungel did not seem to support either of the options, and homed in on the question of using the so-called northern road. The Estonian governorate had already had discussions with the Chancery Board about the route from Reval (probably via Narva) to Viborg and thence Uleåborg, where the post would have been conveyed along the western coast of the Gulf of Bothnia to Stockholm. In 1676 Klingstedt saw a postal route from Reval to the Porkkala headland as one of the possible options. However, during the winter months the post would be conveyed via Nyslott and Kajana to join the northern route. During spring and autumn storms and in winter it was extremely difficult to cross the Åland Sea, which caused longer delays than the slow but steady route around the Gulf of Bothnia. Lange did not reach any decisions about the use of the northern route. On his way back to Stockholm he spoke to the postmaster of Viborg, who had just returned from Uleåborg and knew of numerous complications. Lange does not specify what they were, but according to him letters from Riga took five weeks to reach the capital using the northern road. It should be mentioned that Lange also discussed the postal traffic to Porkkala with von Tiesenhausen, deliberating the suggestion of a member of the Estonian commission for the restitution of alienated estates, baron Carl Bonde, who thought that the post could be conveyed over the Gulf by the peasants of the islands of Wulf and Nargön, an idea which von Tiesenhausen as a member of the commission had approved.

In order to check the postal route via Courland to Memel, Lange went to Mitau. There were several obstacles to the Swedish post in Courland, including the closure of the road. The residents of Mitau were not allowed to accommodate
the Swedish postilions or their horses; instead, an old shoemaker had agreed to look after the horses, which cost him 50 rdr a year, paid to the Duke of Courland. As of 1688 the Swedish post was conveyed through Courland to Memel by four German postilions, and only one of them, Joachim Giese, had signed a written contract. The postilions went from Riga to Memel twice a week and were paid 180 dr sm a year, which meant that the price per mile was 5½ silver rst. According to Lange the postilions ‘are such sturdy chaps that they are in the habit of ploughing straight ahead regardless’. In his memorandum to Hastfer, the Livonian governor-general, Lange claimed that the activities of the Duke of Courland and the Prince Elector of Brandenburg hindered the passage of the Swedish post, forcing up the postage for letters going abroad, which at the time of writing had reached 34 rst. In his final report written in Stockholm, Lange did not mention the postal traffic through Courland. Despite the difficulties, the postal traffic to Memel and westwards worked.

In 1688 postal traffic from Riga to Russia was also functioning. Although his instructions of 15 November 1687 required Lange to study the disagreement between the postmasters of Riga and Moscow, as soon as he arrived in Riga he realized the disagreement had already been solved. Post to Moscow went via Neuhausen to Pechory. In his final report Lange mentions that the postmasters’ disagreement in the early 1680s was caused by the refusal of Andreas Winius, the Moscow postmaster, to pay a debt of 300 dr sm for postal traffic to the Swedish side.

Lange corroborated the rates of postage charged in the post offices in Estonia and Livonia; all different and none of them approved. A letter weighing 1 lod (c. 13.3 g) from Riga to Stockholm and vice versa cost 12 silver rst; a letter from Reval to Stockholm was also 12 silver rst, but from Stockholm to Reval 9 silver rst; a letter from Dorpat to Stockholm cost 12 silver rst, but only 9 silver rst in the other direction; a letter from Wesenberg to Stockholm was 8 silver rst, but vice versa 5½ silver rst. The movement of Riga postilions was hindered in every possible way, and the Riga post could no longer operate regularly (see Jensch 1934, pp. 4–6; Petersone 1997, p. 212).
versa 9 silver rst; while Lange also noted that letters from Reval to Wesenberg and Narva both cost 3 silver rst per lod, although Wesenberg was 15 miles and Narva 30 miles from Reval. In Wesenberg, 2 silver rst had to be paid for letters dispatched in either direction. Letters from Reval to Nyen, Kexholm, Viborg, Borgå, or Helsingfors all cost the same, generally 6 silver rst per lod, although Helsingfors was 40 miles further away from Nyen. Lange mentioned several other similar examples.84

In conclusion it could be said that during his visit to Estonia and Livonia, Lange did not directly resolve any of the issues spelled out in his instruction from the Chancery Board. His final report, its appendices, and the letters he wrote during his sojourn in Estonia and Livonia cover many other problems, such as the official oaths taken by postmasters, their job descriptions and contracts, security, and so on. Yet the main outcome was his charting of the existing situation, informing the Chancery Board of the nature of the post in the overseas provinces over which it had so recently acquired direct authority. His inspections demonstrated that the postal system worked, for letters were delivered, albeit not always according to a recognisable pattern. A number of problems noted in Lange’s report were later addressed: the most obvious changes were to the official oaths sworn by the postmasters, and to the lists of institutions and officials who were entitled to send free letters. According to the Swedish example, the number of free letters and chargeable letters should be counted. On 9 June 1688 Charles XI decided that the post-ship *Flyggaren* was to run between Stockholm and Reval,85 although the venture seems not to have done well, since in the autumn of 1691 the ship was sold.86 On 18 June 1688 the Chancery Board submitted the postal budget for Estonia and Livonia to the king for approval.87 Comparing the sums presented in the budget and in Lange’s suggestions during the inspection, it seems that some of his recommendations were realized: for example, the budgets for Dorpat, Pernau, and Wesenberg post offices resemble Lange’s calculations; yet at the same time the budgets of the Reval and Riga post offices were cut. The Chancery Board’s records reveal that the postmasters in the provinces came under closer scrutiny after the inspections. But the number of problems also rose, especially for the postmaster of Riga, whose disputes and misunderstandings with the Moscow postmaster and the Duke of Courland redoubled.

84 Kanslikollegium, G II f, 1, Lange’s report on postal tariffs, RA.
87 7400–1–81, Interims stat för Lif- och Estlandske postcontoiren Ao 1688, LVVA.

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The Swedish post was formally founded in 1636, nominally by Queen Christina, in fact by her minority government. The first post ordinance was drafted and signed by Axel Oxenstierna, the chancellor of the realm. The post was thus just one of many different Crown institutions that Oxenstierna set in train during his time in office (1612–1654). He had, however, also developed the previous postal organization in 1624, which proved an immediate failure. Oxenstierna may have gone on to learn far more about postal operations while he was on the Continent (1626–1636), yet come 1636 he was still hardly in a position to set up a postal organization on his own. Instead, the necessary expertise had to be sought elsewhere, mostly abroad, and a slew of foreign experts immigrated to Sweden, with Oxenstierna’s approval or at his request, to control the post in its formative period.¹

The exact influence of the Crown or the chancellor on postal affairs is therefore hard to pin down. The Crown’s interests were most likely limited to cheap and reliable letter transport; its efforts, to overall supervision. Regular news from the Continent was crucial in times of Sweden’s growing engagement in foreign affairs. Keeping up a ‘good correspondence’ within the Swedish realm and with Swedish diplomats on the Continent was a recurrent phrase used to describe the Crown’s interest in news. It was impressed on postmasters as well as diplomats as their primary task. The Crown had an enormous appetite for news and was frantic to obtain intelligence of all kinds, yet had insufficient financial means to do so. The Crown’s influence on the post, therefore, was that of a principal who commissioned a service that it was unable to pay for.

It was left to the postmasters, in particular those in Stockholm and other central nodes of the fast growing Swedish postal network (Riga, Stralsund, Hamburg, Helsingør), to finance and organize this new institution in detail, while the Crown in return offered them protection from competitors. The form the post’s administration took was thus determined by individual postmasters’ expertise and their financial means. They shaped the post’s organization as they saw fit,

¹ The pioneers in researching Sweden’s seventeenth-century postal history were Teodor Holm and Nils Forssell. It is impossible to refer to their works sufficiently often to do them justice.
while meeting the Crown’s needs. At the same time, postmasters had to consider the needs of other users, and above all the merchants, who had to pay for their services, and in so doing financed the post. However, the post was not only about letters. In the seventeenth century, news itself was commoditized and put on public sale. The editing of newspapers and the distribution of news as well as letters were lucrative businesses; businesses that substantially changed the modes of international trade. In Sweden, the business of news was tightly linked to the post. It was part of the postmasters’ economy. Neither were post and newspapers merely perceived as two sides of the same coin, for, as Johann Peter von Ludewig argued in 1700, there was a causal link between the merchant’s interest in newspapers as the prerequisite for a postal organization, and the post’s introduction by princes in order to have their correspondence delivered for free:

However, as soon as Germany discovered the arcanum of the post, which allowed the princes to have their correspondence paid for by strangers, the to and fro of writing newspapers began.

The particular organization of the early post was typical of Europe’s emerging bureaucracies, and has been analysed by Anthony Giddens in terms of an expert system. The expert answers for a certain expertise and the credit with which to run a business on behalf of the government – and under its protection. In exchange for the expert’s investments, the government commonly granted a monopoly. It was the experts who gained most of the profits, which under normal circumstances remained where they were generated. The postmasters in the bigger cities obviously succeeded in extracting substantial incomes, although the sums involved are vague at best; neither is there a clear picture of the situation in the minor post offices in small provincial towns. We do know, though, that postmasterships almost always attracted a substantial number of applicants.

The post’s formative period lasted until the late 1670s, at which point it was drawn into the general reform process set off by Sweden’s defeat at the hands of Denmark and Brandenburg. This war had finally convinced the Swedish nobility as well as the other three estates that after decades of internal dispute they would have to bow to their king, Charles XI, in his elaborate reform of Crown affairs and the state’s finances. The needs of the state, in particular the necessity of financing a standing army, were provided for by the indelningsverk, a military te-

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3 Ludewig 1705, p. 92.
5 According to an account for 1669 and 1670, these incomes could be substantial. Whereas the office in Stockholm in 1669 had revenues of about 15,417 dr sm, the post offices in Jönköping earned 420 dr sm, Kalmar 708 dr sm, Göteborg 1,227 dr sm, Falun 380 dr sm, Pitėa 8 dr sm, and Åbo 400 dr sm (Kanslikollegium, G II a, vol. 1, RA).
the tenure system by which the soldiery were provided for in kind, receiving farms to recompense them for their service. This reform was accompanied by the compulsory restitution of alienated Crown land, and an investigation into the work of the minority government for Charles XI. The king’s envälde (lit. ‘autocracy’), a kind of royal absolutism that ostensibly required that the monarch consult with the estates, included a thorough transformation of the Crown institutions, which were bound ever closer to the king’s will and the central bureaucracy. These institutions thus experienced a huge step forward in terms of bureaucratization, not least with the introduction of stricter financial controls: the institutions’ budgets (stater) were increasingly standardized, and income and expenditure were monitored closely in an attempt to maximize the Crown’s resources.

The process of bureaucratization and incorporation was thus far from being unique to the Swedish post, but it came at different times and advanced at different speeds, for whereas postal reform in Sweden proper started in the late 1670s, the Baltic provinces only followed suit in the late 1680s, and the German provinces in the 1690s and in the early 1700s. Yet despite these differences, the thrust of the changes was always the same, for they were intended to strengthen Crown influence on every aspect of the post. Like many other European governments, the Swedish Crown had discovered that the post promised substantial incomes: it now demanded its share. Unlike most other Crown institutions, however, the post remained comparatively independent, with its own budget and archive, although it was closely monitored by kanslikollegium, the Chancery Board, of which the postmaster general was a member.

The reforms inevitably curtailed the postmasters’ ability to organize postal affairs as they saw best. The early, relatively independent postal organization increasingly became a full state institution. Still, the reforms clearly did not put an end to the postmasters’ privileges and influence. The Chancery Board and the postmaster general had reason to listen, as they usually did, to the postmasters’ suggestions and schemes. But the Chancery Board’s approval and signature was necessary for almost every appointment or organizational reform. Probably the larger problem for the postmasters was that their financial interests were not served by the Crown introducing regular budgets and tighter financial controls. All postmasters had to render an account of their income and expenditure regularly, and any surplus had to be transferred to Stockholm.

The guidelines and budgets were similar to those of other Crown institutions. The first post budget was introduced in the 1670s, with hardly any effect. Subsequent efforts were more successful, and from the 1690s onwards the post

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7 The post budget for Wismar was introduced in 1699, on occasion of a new postmaster, Christian Wankijff (Wankijff to Schmedeman, Wismar, 8 March 1706, ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 3 D, vol. 180, RA).

8 According to the post director’s archive, the post’s surplus amounted to 30,000–40,000 dr sm per annum in the last two decades of the seventeenth century (Kanslikollegium, C II, vol. 5, RA).
budgets clearly outlined the income of every post servant, starting in Stockholm and working down to the smallest post office in Sweden proper and in its provinces. The postmasters understood that this official statement of income severely limited their financial opportunities. In about 1680, postmaster general Johan Gustaf von Beijer still called the Stockholm post funds his ‘pledge’. He obviously considered the Swedish post to be a part of his private economy. The new budgets therefore profoundly affected the postmasters’ ability to influence their work according to their essentially private interests.

Von Beijer was not slow on the uptake. He wrote to governor-general Henrik Horn in Stade that he heard about the changes to the post in the city of Hamburg. According to him, the Swedish post was about to recover after the war against Denmark and the death in June 1681 of Bernhard Böse (the Swedish postmaster in Hamburg), if:

it were left unhindered and kept in its old form. In this case, there would be no lack of experienced staff and the necessary means to run the post. Unfortunately, things have changed. In future, the post will be considered a regular income for the Crown. As such it is obliged to contribute to the state as well as to its most pressing expenses far beyond the post’s revenues in these hard times. The post will thus be subject to the Chancery Board’s finances, and will consequently fall into disorder and a lamentable state, which is why not only the late Böse but also I have very good reason to complain in higher places. The necessary means to run this business [the post], which hitherto derived from it, are now taken out of our hands. We will be forced to apply and solicit endlessly for every single demand in the Royal Chancery Board and the Treasury to ensure our bare necessities.

Von Beijer and his fellow postmasters tried a variety of ploys to ward off all reform, for example by claiming that they were unaware that they required the Chancery Board’s final approval, or that they had to provide sureties, regular accounts, and so on. The Chancery Board had some difficult years imposing reforms such as it having the sole right to appoint postmasters. By 1700, however, its archive clearly shows signs of its success, not least in the exponential growth in the paperwork it produced.

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9 The term post servant is used to denote everybody employed by the Swedish post; the first post budgets did not mention any salaries outside Sweden proper, except for the post commissars (see n. 37 below) in Hamburg and Helsingør. The provincial postal systems, with exception for Bremen-Verden, were considered in later post budgets; see ÖPD, Postkamreraren’s arkiv, E 1 B, vol. 1, RA, the post budget for the year 1686.


11 Rep. 5a, Fach 242, Nr. 6, Staatsarchiv Stade, undated, but probably summer 1681.

12 See Enn Küng’s chapter in this volume on strategies to avoid this kind of control.

13 Consider the new postmastership in Mariestad 1684, where the candidate of the Chancery Board, Jonas Justus Aurell, found that Johan Gustaf von Beijer had promised the position to his own candidate, without even informing the Chancery Board (Kanslikollegium, E I C, vol. 1, RA, Stockholm, 27 November 1684).
There is just one problem. The post budgets describe regular incomes for the post servants, in particular the postmasters, which are clearly insufficient to explain the postmasters’ interest in this service. Conditions of employment for the various post servants – postmasters, stagecoach-drivers, messengers, and clerks – varied, as did their wages. This is also true of the Swedish provinces, where other professions were also involved in public communications, not least because the post in the German provinces had a far stronger position in the diligence business. On the whole, however, official wages were low. A substantial number of post servants did not get any wages at all; this was attributed to the smallness of the incomes that their offices generated. What is more, a postmastership in particular required an initial investment, which was not reimbursed by the Crown. Thus the financial situation of the post servants was at best complicated given that it depended on their own private assets, which were not part of the Chancery Board’s financial system; the number of their complaints about financial problems was legion. Despite this, the position of a post servant was attractive; the number of applications remained high, even after Charles XI’s reforms had been implemented. Indeed, the sheer number of applicants seems to be the only constant when it came to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century postmasters’ finances. We can be reasonably sure that contemporaries thought postmasterships lucrative. There is no proof, however, that it was the wages per se that attracted them.

In other words, the image of a Swedish post diligently monitored by the Chancery Board does make sense. The Chancery Board’s archive gives ample evidence to bear it out. In consequence, previous postal historians could use the Chancery Board’s archive to their advantage, but in doing so, they placed themselves in the Chancery Board’s position and took its archive as the template for the post’s organization – as it should have been. Postal history thus resembles the historiography of early modern bureaucracies in general. Based on a more-or-less outspokenly Weberian model of ongoing bureaucratization, historians have highlighted obstacles, failures, corruption, sometimes even greed on behalf of the post servants. Certainly, the post historian Teodor Holm ascribed institutional success and individual failure according to this template. However, when it comes to the postmasters’ wages, Holm was somewhat stumped by the problems outlined here. He devoted just a few pages of his study to the subject, which he obviously thought of little significance. He simply counted on the postmasters’ ability to take care of their income in a more or less legal manner. The purpose of this chapter is not to improve on Holm, nor to correct him. His command of a very rich material cannot be much bettered, and it was not in

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14 Holm 1906–1929.
15 See Holm 1906–1929, v. pt. 2, pp. 356–357, where he discusses these problems. The chapter is titled ‘Misappropriation of revenues’, which leaves the reader in little doubt that he believes the postmasters were corrupt.
the nature of those sources to prompt his interest in the post servants’ income. Instead, this chapter will present a different reading – another perspective on postal history – that is all the more relevant as postmasters experienced the same kinds of problem as other Crown servants. Moreover, postmasters were not only comparable to other civil services groups; they frequently held several such offices (mayor, town councillor, customs officer, a clerkship) simultaneously or consecutively. Thus they were part of a small elite of bourgeois Crown servants, situated in a local context of often interrelated families. Of these positions, that of postmaster was usually considered superior, while few men surrendered a postmastership in favour of another Crown office. Despite differences in the administration of Crown resources, these positions seem to have been shaped by similar financial conditions. Their remuneration has consequently been examined by a number of historians, but without a convincing answer to the problems noted here.

The financial situation of the lower ranks of post servants offers a point of comparison for the postmasters’ circumstances. The well-documented appointment of a postmaster in Kalmar will here be used to chart the different rules the Chancery Board applied in its negotiations with postmasters. (In that particular case, a widow was appointed unofficially, obviously in order to protect her and her household’s interests.) The postal organization in the Swedish provinces differed from Sweden proper by reason of the nature of the conglomerate of states that constituted the Swedish Crown. In all of these examples, privileges, traditions, the postmasters’ investment, and the patrimonial care of the Crown affected the day-to-day practice of the post, despite intricate bureaucratic routines. Each postmaster’s household was interlaced with the Crown in ways that thwart the seemingly obvious distinction between public and private spheres in early modern societies. The state’s archives offer little in the way of information on the postmasters’, or indeed other Crown servants’, personal finances. This chapter will therefore conclude by discussing why this was the case. How did Crown servants negotiate their private interests, and what other sources are there for the study of their finances?

The starting-point for this investigation is therefore that postmasters commanded not only official incomes, but also unofficial incomes that were associated with the post, and that were sufficiently reliable to explain the huge interest in postmasterships. These incomes were considered legitimate; in other words, the postmasters did not primarily rely on corruption, embezzlement, extortion, and the like, for although such illegal behaviour existed – and still does – it can hardly explain the postmasters’ circumstances, not least because the sources present the post as a public institution of high repute. Instead, we are faced with a complex situation, which cannot be described using the Chancery Board’s archive alone. The findings presented here point to a different type of organization altogether, one that was neither a rational bureaucracy in the
Weberian sense, nor its illegitimate counterpart. The nature of Sweden’s civil administration was more complicated than the image of a steadily advancing modern bureaucracy would lead us to suppose.

Sources

In this, much comes down to the reliability and scope of the archives. There is clearly no reason to doubt the archive material’s authenticity; in doubt is rather its range, its ability to describe the post servants’ working lives, in particular the postmasters’ personal finances. There simply is no archive collection that tells us of a post servant’s various sources of income other than his official wages. Consequently, this chapter will argue its case with the help of one-off or incidental information and assumptions based on other sources or for other kinds of Crown servant.

In this effort, the archives’ silence is more than just an obstacle. It tells us something not just about the post servants’ perception of their service, but the Crown’s perception as well. Instead of deploring the archives’ silence and omissions, we have to understand its underlying message. What information was deemed relevant for inclusion in the archive? The postmasters’ efforts to promote their interests were based on arguments that were considered legitimate or meaningful to some degree; other arguments were not. In consequence, some things were mentioned openly, others not at all. Was the Chancery Board of the same mind, or were there ways to negotiate this in a different way, possibly outside the official correspondence, using back channels? Before we can answer these kinds of question, we have to look at the available sources.

Overall, the archive situation is rather good for the time around 1700, as there is the archive of the Chancery Board as well as the postmaster general, both of which are well preserved and methodical.16 These archives, however, only show one side of the picture, the picture that the post servants presented to the Chancery Board and the postmaster general. The archive also contains the Chancery Board’s discussions and the measures it took. We might call this the official, legitimate side – from which substantial parts of postal history are missing. Unfortunately, we have hardly any additional material about the post servants, their finances, and their position in their respective communities. There is not a single surviving post servant’s private archive, although the Chancery Board explicitly demanded that deceased postmaster’s papers had to be registered and secured.17

16 See Magnus Linnarsson’s chapter in this volume on the Chancery Board and the post’s archives.
17 For unknown reasons, even the most important figures in Sweden’s early postal history, the regional directors von Beijer, Jakob Becker, Statius Stein, Joachim Vatky-Rosencreutz and others left virtually no material; Kanslikollegium, G II a, vol. 1 and 2, RA, might be the remains of Johan Gustav von Beijer’s archive, which also contains some of his father’s papers.
There are, however, some differences between the situation in Sweden proper and its provinces, which can be explained by the complicated structure of the Swedish realm. The Swedish king ruled over a conglomerate of states, with different sets of laws and forms of political agency. There were efforts to unify the rule of these territories, albeit with mixed results, before Sweden lost most of its provinces in the Great Northern War (1700–1721). The Chancery Board treated the post in the Swedish provinces differently, because their constitutional rights as well as older customary laws needed to be taken into consideration. Besides, until the 1680s the Chancery Board had no clear picture of the postal organization in its provinces, hence several long investigations by post Secretary Johan Lange in the late 1680s and mid 1690s that were the basis for consecutive reforms. Still, the Chancery Board’s influence on postal matters outside Sweden proper should not be overestimated. Until the late seventeenth century, in the case of Bremen-Verden even up the early eighteenth century, the Chancery Board had only a pretty rough picture of how the post was organized.

In Sweden proper, the post was introduced in 1636. It did not replace any previous organization, with the exception of an unwieldy system of carriage traffic (skjutsväsendet). Even local transport systems such as häradsposten and klockarposten (official messengers, distributing official mail within a parish or region) seem to have continued unaffected. The post servants were not organized in any way in their various groups, and almost all of their contacts and deliberations are lost. We find small pieces of information about their lives, such as several probate inventories (bouppteckningar) that give reasonably detailed descriptions of the relevant postmasters’ possessions.

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18 Gustafsson 1988 has described Sweden as a conglomerate state, and although I agree on the broad outlines, I would differentiate between a conglomerate Crown and a conglomerate of states. The notion of ‘the state’ in Swedish historiography is often used anachronistically, perhaps because substantial changes in the state’s development between 1500 and 1750 are not sufficiently taken into consideration.

19 These differences can be explained by the different ways in which the territories were integrated into the Swedish realm. The Livonian estates, for example, had far fewer privileges than the Estonian or Pomeranian because Livonia was acquired by military conquest.

20 In 1698, the Chancery Board wrote to Charles XII about the post in the German provinces: ‘we have to follow the German order. The post therefore cannot be administered in the same way as the Swedish’ (Stockholm, 24 October 1698, Kanslikollegium, C II, vol. 5, RA).

21 See Enn Küng’s chapter in this volume.

22 It is reasonable to assume the postmasters did have regular mail contact, as they had the right to send letters free of charge. They also had an interest in regular news, which they received from their colleagues. Almost all of their correspondence of this kind is lost.

23 Of the various archives that hold probate inventories, the county record office in Uppsala is perhaps the most useful for postal historians, as it holds several probate inventories for postmasters of the Lake Mälaren area (see Rådhusrätt för Arboga, Eskilstuna, Köping, and Uppsala, Landsarkiv Uppsala).
The situation was far better for the Swedish provinces, especially Pomerania and to a lesser extent Bremen-Verden. Even here, the official, legitimate face of the post dominates. In the provinces, however, the post was also involved in the diligence traffic, an enterprise already established before the Swedish post was set up, and the result was a series of legal and political deliberations. Even more important was the fact that there were competing postal organizations, the most important being the Hamburg–Danzig and Hamburg–Amsterdam messenger routes. These were run by the cities’ merchants and were fully developed long before the Swedish post started up in Pomerania and Bremen-Verden. Four of the more important post offices in Pomerania (Demmin, Anklam, Ückermünde, and Stettin) already existed as part of the messenger route and remained so even after Sweden had introduced its own post. The postilions wore the Swedish colours; the organization as well as the profits still belonged to the major cities’ merchants.

The Hamburg–Danzig messenger route was by far the most important competitor, but there were also postal services run by Denmark, Brandenburg, and Mecklenburg, and of course the Imperial Post of Thurn und Taxis. In addition, there were smaller organizations, such as the messenger post run by the Lübeck-based ‘merchants in Skåne’ (Schonenfahrer), and the ‘purveyance post’ that catered to individuals (such as governor-general Nils Bielke). They all added to the Swedish post’s complications, and were the cause of further deliberations; a debate that was wholly redundant in Sweden proper as there was simply no other political agent to compete with the Crown’s post or the Chancery Board.

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24 For the post in the Baltic provinces, see Enn Küng’s chapter in this volume; for the German provinces see Engelhardt 1926; Roessner 1986; and Droste 2009a.
25 The messenger route between Hamburg and Gdansk was not a ‘post’ in a formal sense, because neither city had the necessary right to operate a post – the *ius territoriale*, which in the Peace of Westphalia was only granted to sovereign governments – and therefore could not open their own post offices, and had to employ Pomeranians as messengers, clad in Swedish colours. The organization, however, remained in the hands of the Hamburg merchants, as did the profits. The messenger route between Hamburg and Amsterdam worked along the same lines.
26 On the Hamburg merchants’ messenger routes, see Ahrens 1962.
27 The special privileges, not to mention the profits, of the Hamburg merchants’ messenger service were much debated by the Chancery Board (Chancery Board to Charles XII, Stockholm, 24 October 1698, Kanslikollegium, C II, vol. 5, RA).
28 Purveyance post (*Küchenpost*, lit. ‘kitchen post’) was the popular name for the weekly coach traffic between cities or princely courts and the entrepôts of conspicuous consumption (in Northern Germany, Hamburg). In the second half of the seventeenth century, several purveyance posts were allowed to operate, if only because it was well-nigh impossible to deny this privilege when requested by a prince or a member of Sweden’s high nobility. However, it was assumed the coach-drivers were prepared to carry letters and passengers as a side-line (see Bernhardt 2009).
29 In the late 1650s, Johan von Beijer set up a competing postal route between Stockholm and Hamburg after he had been dismissed as director of the Swedish post. This route was said to have been faster and more reliable than the official postal service, yet was abandoned when von Beijer was reinstated as director in 1662 (Kanslikollegium, G II a, vol. 2, RA).
The archive situation for the Baltic and German provinces is much more fragmented, not least because the Chancery Board needed much more time to implement its firm rule over postal matters.\(^{30}\) Its achievements were patchy, particularly in Bremen-Verden, where the Swedish postal organization was never introduced.\(^{31}\) The Swedish post in Pomerania was something of an exception, due mostly it seems to the assiduousness of Joachim Vatky (in 1705 ennobled under the name of Rosencreutz).\(^{32}\) The archive situation is thus more colourful, offering a greater variety of perspectives, and benefiting from a certain amount of court records. Contrary to the situation in Sweden proper, powerful cities and equally powerful estates partook in public affairs. The city magistrates were more independent of government control than in Sweden.\(^{33}\) Even the estates put forward legitimate claims to participation in postal matters. The Pomeranian estates, for example, doubted the need to extend the post in Pomerania beyond a half-dozen cities. They argued that the quantity of letters was too small, and that every new post office first of all served the private interests of its postmaster, namely enrichment in order to display a certain social standing.\(^{34}\) It is not clear if this position gained much of a hearing, but it certainly took far longer to introduce a post in the less populated areas of Pomerania than in Sweden proper, where by 1700 every small town, however distant and insignificant, harboured its own post office.\(^{35}\)

\(^{30}\) When Christian Wankijff took over the post office in Wismar in 1699, he described his predecessor’s work as ‘private’, in that von Treuenfels never sent any accounts or money to the Chancery Board (Wankijff to Åkerhielm, Wismar, 11 November 1702, ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 3 D, vol. 180, RA).

\(^{31}\) The Swedish post in Bremen-Verden was actually granted as a hereditary fief to a foreign nobleman, Franz Ernst von Platen, who organized a post service that was Swedish in name only (Roessner 1986).

\(^{32}\) The Chancery Board’s direction of the post in Pomerania was largely implemented thanks to Joachim Vatky. He started as a postmaster in Stralsund in 1684, and subsequently rose to the position of post director for Pomerania. He used his good relations with the Chancery Board in Stockholm to secure his position in Stralsund, and in the process asked for the Chancery Board’s intervention and reported continuously to Stockholm (see his numerous letters in ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 3 D, vol. 135 and 136, RA); Christian Wankijff, postmaster in Wismar since 1699, also relied heavily on the Chancery Board’s support (ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 3 D, vol. 180, RA).

\(^{33}\) The city archives of Riga and Stralsund offer important material for Swedish postal history. Stralsund felt so strong in relation to the Swedish king that the council asked for the return of the post office to their control (undated memorandum (about 1700), Rep. 4: Nr. 685, Stadtarchiv Stralsund).

\(^{34}\) Memorandum by the Pomeranian estates addressed to the government, 1 April 1700, Handschriften HS 654, Stadtarchiv Stralsund.

\(^{35}\) Vatky-Rosencreutz wrote to Schmedeman that he had misgivings about opening more post offices in Pomerania. Even with the inducement of keeping all the income, he doubted he would find anyone willing to take on a post office without an additional salary (28 February 1708, ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 3 D, vol. 136, RA).
The post servants’ wages in perspective

To understand the flaws in the post budgets at the turn of the eighteenth century, we have to consider different conditions of service and wages. At the top of the post budget we find the post office in Stockholm and several of the larger offices inside and outside the Swedish realm. The offices in Riga and Stralsund, and the commissars in Hamburg and Helsingør earned as much as 400–700 dr sm per annum.\textsuperscript{36} The bulk of the post offices earned substantially less, between 15–150 dr sm. About a dozen offices did not have any regular income at all. Instead, their postmasters were allowed simply to keep any revenue that their office generated. Even then, they were obliged to send in regular accounts of their income, as was mandatory for salaried postmasters, but it seems that they were monitored rather loosely.

The higher incomes might sound reasonable enough at first. To put them into perspective, however, we have to consider the necessary costs. A commissar in Hamburg or Helsingør had to represent the Crown in different ways, the post being just one of them. Subsequently, they needed a house and staff to do their job as well as to display their status.\textsuperscript{37} An annual income of 600–700 dr sm was by no means sufficient to do that. Post commissar Barthold Huswedel in Hamburg not only invested in a diligence route to Bremen, together with Stralsund’s post commissar Vatky-Rosencreutz, he also acted as a financier on behalf of the Crown, cashing huge bills of exchange, and distributing money to the Swedish army and the Pomeranian government. He was said to have been rich before he entered Swedish service. But the financial transactions and his credit line clearly far exceeded his wages. Huswedel finally went bankrupt, for unknown reasons.\textsuperscript{38}

A similar example offered by Johann Balthasar Birnbaum, a Pomeranian merchant, who early in the century offered to lease all the Pomeranian post for 2,000 rdr per annum.\textsuperscript{39} He was turned down, only to become postmaster in Anklam in 1705, a smaller, rural town with a post office worth 80 rdr in annual income. According to Vatky-Rosencreutz, Birnbaum had boasted that he would travel to Stockholm to make sure he got the position and that he would take 2,000 rdr with him.\textsuperscript{40} In 1710, Birnbaum became postmaster in Stettin. By 1714,

\textsuperscript{36} Outside the Swedish realm, the Crown employed several commissars; as well as managing its postal affairs, they were engaged in Swedish trade and low-level diplomacy.

\textsuperscript{37} The Crown might be thought to have an obvious interest in the appearance of their foreign post offices, given that they displayed the Swedish colours and arms. The necessary investment does not seem to have been forthcoming, however.

\textsuperscript{38} There are few sources that shed light on Huswedel’s work; see Kammararkivet, Likvidationer, serie 95–96, bunt 24, RA, in which his family some decades later claimed the Crown still owed more than 50,000 rdr.

\textsuperscript{39} There were different kinds of Reichstaler across Europe and in the Holy Roman Empire, and none were official currency in Sweden proper. The Reichstaler equated to approximately 1½ Swedish dr sm.

\textsuperscript{40} Vatky-Rosencreutz to post director Johan Schmedeman, Stralsund, 13 April 1705, ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 3 D, vol. 136, RA.
Birnbaum claimed that he had lent the Crown more than 100,000 rdr of his own money or with the help of his credit. In the same year, he designed a state lottery, at that time a very successful way of financing entire countries and not only cities. Birnbaum claimed that his lottery would pay out 5 million rdr, bringing the Crown a substantial income. All of these plans ultimately failed, and Birnbaum left the post altogether in 1715. Still, how was he able to bandy about such large sums of money? And if he was able to do this independently of his postmasterships, why did he take them on in the first place?

What the postmasters who had no official wages lived on remains unclear. If it were true that their offices handled just a handful of letters now and then, the profits would have been far too small to make it worthwhile, even when other services were factored in. The postmaster in Greifswald, Johann Palthenius, lived in a small town in Pomerania with an even smaller university and a handful of government institutions, all of which had the privilege to send letters free of charge. Palthenius claimed that there were exactly three merchants in town who regularly corresponded with merchants outside Greifswald. The income from these letters should have been far too small to make this position attractive, yet that is exactly what it was: Palthenius received the postmastership as unsalaried remuneration for his poorly paid work as a clerk of the court of appeal (hovrätt) in Greifswald. He stayed in office for decades, receiving no wages for the first fifteen years, and only a small one afterwards. And he did not only merely hold office; he did something with it, introducing two diligence routes from Greifswald to Stralsund and to Wolgast, putting up the initial investment and standing all the financial risks involved. How was he able to do so?

The situation is different for the smaller post offices in Sweden proper, for the material is even more scarce. The official duties of the postmasters were most likely limited to just the postal business, which only took one or two days’ work a week. But even then, an income of anything from 15 to 100 drs hardly suffices to explain why the post office almost always attracted the town elite – mayors, customs officers, and members of the council. In their case, the post office wage

41 Birnbaum to the Chancery Board, Stettin, 14 August 1714, Kanslikollegium, G II d, vol. 6, RA.
42 According to Vatky, Birnbaum had to borrow the 2,000 rdr and could not risk to lose the position (Vatky to Schmedeman, Stralsund, 13 April 1705, ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 3 D, vol. 136, RA).
43 Undated paper by Palthenius, appendix to the report by Johan Lange to the Chancery Board on the status of the post in Pomerania, 1694, Kanslikollegium, G II f, vol. 2, RA.
44 Palthenius applied for the postmastership through Johan Rabel, secretary to governor-general Otto Wilhelm von Königsmarck (Johann Palthenius to Johan Rabel, Greifswald, 9 November 1684, Rydholmsamlingen, E 7930, RA). In the 1690s, the Chancery Board debated transferring the post in Hamburg from Huswedel to the resident, Henrik Gabriel Rothlieb, in order to improve the latter’s poor salary (Stockholm, 3 June 1690; Kanslikollegiets protokoll, A II a, vol. 8, pp. 234–235, RA; Stockholm, 6 October 1692, Kanslikollegiets protokoll, A II a, vol. 10, pp. 516–518, RA).
was just one of two or more official salaried appointments, which may well have added up to considerable sums.\textsuperscript{45}

However, in the bigger cities this accumulation of services was called into question.\textsuperscript{46} Gabriel Thelin, clerk at the post office in Stockholm with an annual wage of 300 dr sk, applied in 1685 for the postmastership in Viborg, with an annual income of 150 dr sk, a substantial drop. On top of that, the application entailed moving from the very centre of the Swedish realm to one of its remotest towns.\textsuperscript{47} And as postmasters usually died without any further promotion, he probably did not choose the post office to further his career in Viborg. Still, six years later, in 1691, he received the position of a customs officer in Viborg, because his wages were considered too low. In 1694, however, he had to give up the post office, because it was thought he should not hold two positions at the same time.\textsuperscript{48}

To make things even more complicated, we have to consider the investments that preceded the appointment of a postmaster. They were often substantial, especially when we consider the meagre income in the smaller offices. Ernst Grape mentions several candidates who openly offered money to get the position they wanted.\textsuperscript{49} Not all of them went so far as to offer sums in the thousands, like Birnbaum, who according to Vatky-Rosencreutz had to borrow the money, yet they often equalled an annual wage or more, and at least indicate that the income from the position was larger than we can see in the archive material.\textsuperscript{50} Another form of investment was involved, when postmasters offered to take over the post after the postmaster’s death, although the first year’s income was usually granted to the late postmaster’s widow as her year of grace (\textit{nådeår}). Did the postmasters really work for free for a year to guarantee a rather poorly paid position afterwards?\textsuperscript{51} Other investments mentioned regularly in the postmasters’ letters were in horses, furniture, and all kinds of material necessary to start work. For reasons that will be discussed later, the postmasters were uncommonly vague about these investments. They simply refer to them, without giving any figures. Again, we can only assume that these investments were indeed substantial, if this argument could hope to gain a hearing.

\textsuperscript{45} Olsson 1979, pp. 31–34 publishes a letter from Samuel Agriconius Åkerhielm to Josias Cederhielm, Stockholm, 11 June 1701, on the financial circumstances of the postmastership in Skara, a small town with low postal revenues.

\textsuperscript{46} Peter Nordström discusses the salaries and conditions of servants in the Board of War. Official salaries were clearly too low, but Nordström cannot find any clear evidence of other sources of income, and concludes that many servants took on other work, outside Crown service, thus neglecting their official duties, Nordström 2008.

\textsuperscript{47} For Thelin, see Kammararkivet, Likvidationer, serie 52–53, bunt 2, RA; and the biographical note in Grape 1951, pp. 864–865.

\textsuperscript{48} Grape 1951, pp. 864–865.

\textsuperscript{49} See below, the discussion of the Kalmar postmaster’s appointment in 1703.

\textsuperscript{50} Holm 1906–1929, v. pt. 2, p. 356.

\textsuperscript{51} The Crown did not have any costs during a year of grace, ‘as the state is not burdened with any additional expense, although the office is performed properly’ (Chancery Board to Charles XII, 14 April 1698, Kanslikollegium, C II, vol. 5, RA).
We also have to consider the staff that the postmasters employed to assist them in their work, or who simply acted as their substitutes. In some cases the postmaster’s wife acted on his behalf, in others some unknown clerk. Only rarely did the Chancery Board grant any additional expenses to pay for these stand-ins. They remained anonymous – where they did not succeed in taking over the service after the postmaster’s death. In consequence, the payment of substitutes had to be found from the postmasters’ official wages. Johann Vatky claimed that his clerk in Stralsund cost him at least 100 rdr per annum, plus living expenses. One clerk in the Stockholm post office received an even higher wage, 200 dr sm according to the post budget. A clerk’s life in a provincial town might have been cheaper, yet even so, paying for a clerk would leave little income in the hands of the postmaster, as was the case with postmaster Olof Törnberg in Eskilstuna. In 1718, he asked permission to resign because he claimed that because of his other duties he could not reside in Eskilstuna. Besides, he could not find a clerk to work for him without a wage. The postmaster in Eskilstuna received 30 dr sm per annum. In this light, Törnberg’s refusal to pay his clerk is quite understandable. But who would be willing to work without wages? And why?

One part of the post’s business, and thus one of a postmaster’s duties, was to collect and distribute news. This news services probably brought some income to the postmaster, which will be seen, but ahead of any possible return, the news business also required the postmaster to invest. Again, it was not an item in the post budget. Gabriel Hilletan became postmaster in Helsingborg in 1675. He immediately started to correspond with the chancellor of the realm, Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie, sending handwritten news sheets that were based on Hilletan’s incoming correspondence. To keep this news correspondence up, Hilletan had to employ two clerks – in other words, De la Gardie was hardly his only news customer. On top of these expenses, Hilletan complained that he had to bribe an officer to get hold of the letters from England that were necessary for his work as a correspondent. Hilletan reckoned all these costs – two scribes,
reams of paper, a 1 rdr backhander or some wine for the officer every week – to be part of his work, for which he received a wage of 140 dr sm per annum. The costs of his news business alone exceeded that. Still, Hilletan not only continued the work, for which De la Gardie most likely never paid him.\textsuperscript{58} He also asked De la Gardie for a higher income, pleading to his inadequate wages. But did he really expect De la Gardie to consider his official wages to be his only income?

There are more examples, but as eloquent and voluble as the postmasters’ complaints were about their wages and investments, as silent were they about the figures involved. Instead, rather than ask for a specific change to their wages, or reimbursement for the money invested, the postmasters were at best imprecise, painting a general picture of the supposedly unsatisfactory payments. Their purpose must be seen in a different light altogether. The example of Joachim Vatky-Rosencreutz provides some useful pointers.

Joachim Vatky was born into a bourgeois family in Mecklenburg. He studied at various universities and travelled for some years, a major investment on the part of his family.\textsuperscript{59} He arrived in Sweden in 1677, having served at the courts of Brandenburg and Saxony, and began by serving in various noble households before embarking on a military career, which ended prematurely when he sustained a permanent injury in a fall from a horse. In 1684, he became postmaster in Stralsund, and later post commissar in Swedish Pomerania.

Vatky’s career up to 1684 shows no sign of lucrative offices. He might have had assets of some kind, but both his university education and peregrinations were expensive. Moreover, his court services were poorly paid, and most likely the acquiring of them had involved at least some investment. Even his military career was short – and a failure. Still, once he had begun to work for the Swedish post, he slowly but steadily acquired more and more side-lines that often required substantial investments or credit on his part. In his case, these side-lines related to the post and the diligence traffic: he organized the sea-mail between Stralsund and Ystad; set himself up in the diligence business between Stralsund and Hamburg; and built a hotel in Stralsund to accommodate travellers.\textsuperscript{60} He got involved in the Hamburg–Bremen diligence route, which would

\textsuperscript{58} This news service was very common among diplomats and postmasters, as the private archives of the high nobility demonstrate. There is no evidence that news was paid for on a regular basis. It is instead described as a token of friendship and service. News was considered a gift in a personal relationship (see Droste 2006b, chapter 4). Hilletan himself described this service as a form of attendance (Hilletan to De la Gardie, Markaryd, 22 November 1676, De la Gardieska samling, E 1439, RA).

\textsuperscript{59} The costs for these Grand Tours were usually so high that many families could only afford to send their eldest sons (see Brakensiek 1999, pp. 243–275).

\textsuperscript{60} The accommodation of passengers was traditionally believed to be good business. Postmaster Palthenius in Greifswald claimed that his predecessor’s widow had a safe income, because she accommodated the passengers who Palthenius always directed to her house (PALTHENIUS to Samuel Rabel, Greifswald, 9 November 1684, Rydboholmsamlingen E 7930, RA).
turn out a monumental and expensive failure. And these are just the dealings that he considered part of his Crown office and that he was prepared to commit to paper – although without giving any information on the income they drew in (except complaining endlessly that there was none). Neither is there any record of other income that he might have expected. So, why are we concerned with his finances here?

Vatky referred to all these investments when in 1705 he set out to secure his ennoblement. Customarily, in being ennobled the applicant’s work and investment in the Crown’s service, which included education and previous, often unpaid services, were explicitly listed as qualifications. Both Vatky and the Crown considered his previous work as a regional director sufficient for his ennoblement. The king’s letter gives an extensive description of Vatky’s education, based on Vatky’s own statements. It seems that the Crown also thought the money he had invested a necessary precondition for his social upgrade. In a way, he did pay for his title – and did so openly. His request was granted almost immediately. This kind of bargain was common among the various groups of Crown servants, in the military, and among diplomats and Crown merchants (factors). But even if we consider Vatky’s financial arguments part of a conscious strategy to secure his ennoblement, we still have to figure out how he paid for all of this on such a meagre wage.

Most postmasters certainly never aspired to the peerage. But they applied for a second position within their social reach, in the customs office or city council say, and above all they were intent on keeping their postmastership in the family. Post offices regularly ran in families, irrespective of the actual wages involved. The post was as nepotic in its organization as most other administrative institutions, be they in Sweden or the rest of Europe. This hereditariness was often achieved by marrying the late postmaster’s widow. The recurrent complaints about insufficient payments and costs should therefore not be taken too literally, and should instead be understood as the postmasters reminding the Crown’s of its debt. And the Crown did acknowledge her ‘debts’, when assuring the postmaster and his family of the postmastership.

There is one final observation. The post budget not only described the postmasters’ wages, it also determined what the postilions were paid. And their payment is astonishingly high compared to the postmasters’ wages. In 1698, the

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62 Of all postal officials, Vatky-Rosencreutz is unusually forthcoming about his work (see ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 3 D, vol. 135–136, RA).
63 On 6 July 1705, Vatky wrote to the Chancery Board to presented himself, his services to the Crown, and his request to be admitted to the Swedish nobility (Kanslikollegium, G II d, vol. 10, RA). On 2 August 1705, he was ennobled with the name Rosencrutz.
64 Ennoblement, 2 August 1705, RR, RA; on 6 July 1705, Vatky sent a ‘memorandum’ to Schmedeman, supposedly at the latter’s request, which contained the necessary information for his ennoblement (ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 3 D, vol. 136, RA).
postilions in the Baltic provinces were paid essentially the same as the postmasters. Each postilion on the Wismar–Hamburg route and Hamburg–Assen (on the Danish border) received about the same as the post commissar in Hamburg, although their work, not to mention their social position, was far from being comparable. The difference can be explained by distinguishing between wage and remuneration. Whereas the postmaster was paid a wage for his time and service, the postilion was paid for his expenses, horse, clothes, food, time, and service. Even the postmasters received additional payments for expenses such as ink, sealing-wax, and paper, but they rarely amounted to more than a tenth of their wages, and can therefore hardly have been more than a rough – and pretty low – estimate of their real costs. Whereas postmasters received little money for their expenses, the postilions had low wages, in contrast to comparatively high expenses. When Christian Wankijff in 1700 proposed a new riding postilion route between Wismar and Parchim, he estimated the total annual costs would be 180 rdr. The postilion’s wage was set at 1 rdr per month, less than 10 per cent of the total costs, and hardly sufficient to earn a living.

The distinction between wages and remuneration marks hierarchical positions and thus the social stratification of the post. Wages and remuneration are not just two different ways to recompense post servants for their work; they indicate a difference in relationship between the post and its servants. It is this distinction that will be analysed in detail here, looking at Crown payments, the post servants’ financial situation, and their reasons for becoming post servants in the first place. We will start with the post-farmers, postilions, and others involved at the lower end of the royal post.

Wages and income

The second mailbag

Starting at the bottom of the postal organization, we find very different groups of post servants and modes of transportation. The post in Sweden proper mostly relied on the use of post-farmers, whereas the post in the Baltic and German provinces mostly used postilions (riding or coach). These different ways of transporting letters resulted in different payments. The Swedish post used post-farmers in Sweden proper as well as in parts of Finland, as it was by far the cheapest way to transport letters. There was little in the way of wages involved, although there are infrequent references to very small sums in cash. Remuneration instead consisted of farmland that was given to the post-farmer. Not only was the land

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65 Post budget for 1697, 19 October, Kanslikollegium, C II, vol. 5, RA.
66 Proposal by Wankijff to Samuel Åkerhielm, Wismar, 28 April 1700, ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 3 D, vol. 180, RA.
67 The Royal Ordinance of 1636, 20 February, Stockholm, Förordning om Post–Bådhen.
exempt from taxation, but the post-farmer enjoyed also certain privileges, such
as exemption from conscription. Thus the Crown did not have to pay the post-
farmers in cash, but there certainly was a price the Crown paid in the shape of
reduced income. The land registers (jordeböcker) for the Swedish provinces list
the post-farms. A reform of the system was mooted at the beginning of the
eighteenth century, but it stayed in place long after.

The major disadvantage of this kind of letter transport was that it was not the
post-farmers who kept tabs on the contents of the mailbag as listed in the
accompanying manifest: this was the duty of each postmaster in the towns and
cities through which the mailbag passed, the moment the mailbag arrived. If a
letter disappeared on the road, it was almost impossible to determine where. In
consequence, the post-farmers’ transportation system could not guarantee the
safe delivery of money or any other objects of value, something that was not only
possible but common in other postal systems. Even in Sweden proper, therefore,
riding postilions were introduced on certain core routes, especially between
Stockholm and the Danish border. This system guaranteed the safe and certain
transport of every kind of letter. However, it was far more expensive.

This system, which was simple enough for Sweden proper, was far more
complicated in the provinces. In Pomerania, coach traffic supplemented the
regular postal routes, the most important running between Hamburg and Strals-
sund, and then on by post-ship to Ystad. Both coach and ferry were introduced
in 1683 and seem to have been a financial success right from the beginning.69
The Swedish post paid for the post-ship’s construction, whereas the ferry and
coach traffic were organized and financed by various Crown servants, most
prominently Vatky in Stralsund, Martin Klinkkowström in Stettin, Barthold
Huswedel in Hamburg, and Johann Cannolt (ennobled Treuenfels) in Wismar.
Moreover, they not only organized the traffic, they employed the necessary staff
and paid their wages. At the same time, they had to negotiate with the existing
coach-drivers in the cities, who of course suffered financially from the intro-
duction of a new, official coach line that not only enjoyed the protection of the
Crown,70 but also had a much better chance of establishing its services than
individual coach-drivers did.71

Low-wage, high-cost riding postilions and horse-keepers rarely limited them-
selves to one source of income. The post did not go every day. Vatky and
Klinkkowström employed different postilions and horse-keepers at certain

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68 In 1671 commissar Palmquist produced an ‘abstract’ of the financial accounts for the period
1665–69 to detail the ‘freedoms’ of the post-farmers county by county, probably in order to
give an impression of the ‘costs’, which amounted to 3,333 dr sm (opå Påstböndernes
69 Stähl 2007.
70 In Pomerania it was forbidden for all other coaches to offer their services on post days.
71 Memorandum of the Pomeranian estates addressed to the government, 1 April 1700, Handschriften HS 654, Stadtarchiv Stralsund.
places along the diligence route between Stralsund and Hamburg. In 1698, Klinkowström tried to change this route between Wismar and Hamburg, and to transfer a post station in the process. The horse-keeper, one Franz Erdmann Jonas, refused to do so because he had another business there, brewing beer. Klinkowström dragged him to court, where Jonas had to admit that the first paragraph of his contract explicitly stated the possibility that post stations might have to be altered. Jonas probably saw things rather differently, given the mail only arrived twice a week, leaving him plenty of time to operate a profitable sideline as a brewer. He does not say so, but it is evident that he could not live on the wage that Klinkowström paid him for his work, 16 rdr per annum.\footnote{Tribunalsakten, Nr. 9989, Stadtarchiv Wismar.} We have to assume that such additional sources of income were common. After all, postilions usually found positions in their home areas, where they were already established.

There is not much information to be had on these side-lines; what little there is, is associated with the postal service. The most common was for messengers to deliver letters that were not on the mailbag manifest, accepting letters along the way, if not taking a detour to collect them, and delivering them direct to the addressee or on to the next postilion or post-farmer, and so on. These letters were transported in a second mailbag, unlisted, unsealed, and thus clearly illegal. The same kind of illegal practice was said to be customary for the diligence coaches between Hamburg and Stralsund.\footnote{Germanica, vol. 1040, RA, contains long deliberations on the subject by emissaries in Stockholm of the city council of Hamburg in 1699 and 1700, the Swedish diligence to Stralsund, and violence against the Hamburg messengers; see Kongelige och andra wederbörandes förordningar angående postväsendet (1707), pp. 33-34 for a statute that forbade yachts plying the route between Stockholm and Uppsala to transport letters, Stockholm, 29 May 1703.}

These side-lines must have been routine, as second mailbags could only have worked where postilions and messengers were in cahoots. Contemporaries expected there to be a second mailbag, because the postilions needed the additional income.\footnote{There are no figures for the prices of these illegal services.} The second mailbag’s users in their turn saved a great deal of money and thus reduced their costs, probably substantially. This ‘second’ way to transport letters seems to have been common on almost all levels of the postal organization.

Naturally, the Chancery Board and the postmaster general were concerned about the loss in postal revenues that this behaviour caused, but they were exercised at least as much by the fact that it might slow the postal traffic considerably.\footnote{Undated, probably 1695, memorandum on the post in Uckermünde, Pomerania, Kansli-kollegium, G II f, vol. 2, RA, in which Lange stresses that the postilions slow the post by accepting letters on the side.} The letters had to be fetched and delivered outside the post-house, outside town, or even at a distance from the post route. Moreover, there was analogous behaviour on the part of the post’s primary customers, the Crown servants privileged to send official letters free of charge in the official mailbag. It reduced
information costs for many Crown servants, especially the postmasters them-
selves.76 Mirroring the efforts to forbid the second mailbags, there was a long
debate on the misuse of the privilege of sending letters gratis,77 which met with a
similar degree of success. In consequence, the majority of the post’s customers
probably found ways of reducing their mail expenses.78

Of course, we could limit ourselves to observing that the messengers’ side-
lines and the misuse of gratis postage were illegal, and that in the long run the
attempts to stop both were successful. But that would be to simplify the problem,
for both were very widespread phenomena, and clearly more than just expres-
sions of individual failings. They existed for at least the whole of the post’s first
century, and have to be considered an integral part of a public institution that
did not pay its servants adequately. The Chancery Board hardly encouraged this
illegal behaviour, but neither did it do everything to prevent it. As long as the
second mailbags did not threaten the post proper or exceed a certain, by and
large accepted level, they were tolerated.79

Which letters were transported in the second mailbag? No manifests survive,
naturally; we can only guess at the possible kinds of letters and customers. Un-
like the manifest, which effectively guaranteed all letters would be delivered, the
second mailbag offered no security at all. In contrast, the official mailbag’s inhe-
rent insurance seems to have been very important. As long as the letter transport
was not altered by war, customers obviously relied on their letters’ safe delivery.
When Johan Rosenhane asked post commissar Huswedel in Hamburg how to
send jewels to Sweden, he was reassured: ‘I don’t think it would be particularly
hazardous to send them via mail. In the twenty-four years that I have managed
the post no letter has been stolen or lost.’80 Huswedel claimed, with good reason,
that the Swedish post was reliable when it came to letters in the official mailbag,
which was carried by postilions rather than by post-farmers.81 The rare
investigations into the loss of particular letters show that every time it was taken
very seriously. The second mailbag, therefore, most likely contained less impor-
tant, less urgent, and less valuable letters that did not have to arrive by a certain date.

76 This privilege was limited to official letters, but obviously was used for other letters too.
77 Olsson 2006.
78 Schmedeman ordered post director Grön in Riga to abolish the numerous Crown servants’
privilege of sending correspondence free of charge, because they were abusing the privilege by
sending newsletters to correspondents in Sweden (13 May 1703, Kanslikollegium, B I a, vol. 6,
RA).
79 It is thus only the exceptions to this rule that were singled out, such as the postmaster in
Anklam, who almost only delivered letters free of charge while the postilions took care of all
the other letters (Vatky’s memorandum on the post in Pomerania to the Chancery Board,
80 Barthold Huswedel to Johan Rosenhane, Hamburg, 20 May 1705, E 524, UUB.
81 It was therefore forbidden to send any kind of jewellery in the mail in Sweden proper
(Kongl. Cantzlie Collegii Förordning, angående penningars, juvelers och dess like kostbare
sakers sändande uti påstbrefwen, Stockholm, 14 October 1692).
The daily violation of postal ordinances evidently did not alter the idea of a state-controlled, reliable, and well-ordered postal traffic, at least not in the eyes of contemporaries. They fell into three groups of user. First, there was the state and its bureaucratic institutions, which used the post for free. Second were the merchants, who needed a reliable, fast, and secure letter transport. 82 It was the merchants’ letters that ‘answered for most of the profit’, 83 and that thus paid for the Swedish post. 84 In all discussions if postal revenues, the ‘merchants’ or ‘commerce’ were the common metaphors for this group of user. In 1660, Johan von Beijer proposed that the post be incorporated into the body that cared for Swedish trade interests – the Board of Trade. He considered the post a natural part of Swedish trade. 85 The ‘merchants’ were thus the backbone of a Crown institution. The Crown – in the shape of the Chancery Board – did not pay for the post; instead, it administered the right to live on the income the post generated.

Third, apart from these primary users, the post was open to everyone who could afford its services. That said, the official post was by no means the only available method available: letters were sent with merchant ships, with the help of servants, students, family, and friends, and in the second mailbags. These alternative modes of transportation were less reliable, probably slower, and certainly much cheaper. It seems obvious that all these modes of transportation co-existed for a long time, familiar to everyone, in part illegal, but common all the same, despite the Chancery Board’s efforts to implement its organizational ideas and assert its authority.

The Chancery Board’s statutes have to be considered meaningful, although lost to us. Various brands of financial logic lay behind the everyday practices of the early modern postal system, just as they underpinned the civil administration as a whole. There were both official and less official – but still regular – incomes for post servants that we cannot see in the Chancery Board’s accounts. The Chancery Board’s appointments to postal positions thus not only offered a basic wage, they opened the door to a privileged Crown service, which brought with it additional assets and incomes. Due to the nature of surviving primary sources, we can scarcely qualify or quantify these additional means, but it is vital to bear in mind that an official appointment was given in fief, often by inheri-

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82 The quickness with which a letter was delivered was the single most important factor in the early development of the post, as it promised a competitive advantage for merchants: see Örjan Simonson’s chapter in this volume.

83 Heinrich Schute, Swedish agent in Hamburg, to Crown secretary Anders Gyldenklou, undated but probably 1642, Kanslitjänstemäns koncept och mottagna skrivelser, vol. 17, RA.

84 ‘The importance of the merchants’ letters was undoubted, as ‘only the merchants’ letters bring in income’ (Jochim Brun, postilion between Lübeck and Wismar, to postmaster Christian Wankijff in Wismar, undated but probably in 1699, ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 3 D, vol. 180, RA).

85 Von Beijer’s memorandum, 1660, Kanslikollegium, G II a, vol. 2, RA, refers to the post ‘alß eine die Commercien fûrnehmlich touchirende Sache’.
tance, and so offered the chance to get a toe-hold in a Crown institution and to tap its various assets.86

When it came to post-farmers and postilions, the second mailbag seems to have been the principal asset alongside official wages, which in the case of the post-farmers mostly consisted of a piece of land and privileges that went with it. However, there were other people operating in the postal business who only had a rather small income or none at all. Their gains were different once again.

The privilege of demanding gratuities
The Litzenbrüder (‘packers’) were a guild-like organization that existed in Pomeranian cities as well as in Hamburg and elsewhere.87 They were not directly associated with the post, but were dependent in part on the postal traffic, for they had the sole right to load and unload diligence coaches. The diligence between Hamburg and Stralsund, a section of the postal route to Sweden, had simply to accept the Litzenbrüder’s claims: no one was allowed to take care of his luggage himself; and the Litzenbrüder were paid a small fee for each item they handled. The number of Litzenbrüder was restricted, and every vacancy was filled by the city council, which chose a suitable candidate.88 Here it was neither the Crown nor the Chancery Board, but the public authorities who gave away a privileged position, which was duly protected against competitors. The authorities acted according to their duty to consider the needs of poor citizens, in an act of clemency or grace. The appointments themselves did not involve any direct costs to the city council. Instead, the costs of the Litzenbrüder were socialized. It was the citizens and customers who were formally obliged to employ the Litzenbrüder, however unnecessary their ‘help’ might seem in their, or our, perspective.89 They had to pay a certain fee that clearly secured the packers a decent living, as the number of applicants for every vacant position demonstrated.90

A similar practice can be seen in the case of the Stockholm messengers, who delivered letters within the city. The post budget for 1698 mentions two

87 Called ‘Litzenbrüder’ for the ‘Litze’, cord or twine, with which they attached packages to the coaches (Grimms Deutsches Wörterbuch, <http://germazope.uni-trier.de/Projects/DWB>, s.v. ‘Litzenbruder’, accessed on 13 December 2008).
89 In 1651, an Imperial statute organized the diligence traffic between Hamburg and Lübeck, § 16 of which abolished, albeit with little effect, the Litzenbrüders’ sole right to handle luggage as well as letters (Mainzer Erzkanzlerarchiv, Postalia, Faszikel 5, Nr. 25, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv Wien).
90 Rep. 3: Nr. 4645, Stadtarchiv Stralsund, contains a number of applications for the post of Litzenbruder.
messengers, one of them paid 80 dr sm, the other 70 dr sm a year.91 This wage was hardly adequate to live a decent life in Stockholm. Moreover, in the late seventeenth century there were more than these two messengers, and all were competing for the best letters. Tobias Sparff, who was employed as a messenger between 1681 and 1686 if not longer, complained years later that he had been forced to resign by postmaster general von Beijer, who wished to help another messenger. Sparff continued to go to the post-house in Stockholm, trying to get hold of some letters to distribute. He accused the other messengers, however, of taking the best ones, leaving him with the worst.92 That can only mean that the better letters promised a better fee or gratuity. Sparff was finally ordered to stay away from the post office; this order was reiterated several times.93 In 1694, he applied for the next free position of a messenger, receiving instead a pension of about 15 dr sm per annum.94

Although there were official salaries in the case of the messengers, the system was similar to the Litzenbrüder arrangement in Pomerania. The substantial part of the income, the one that the restricted number of post servants fought over, came with the job. It was paid by the customers, in the case of the Litzenbrüder probably involuntarily and at fixed rate; in the case of the messengers less strictly organized, but still involving a standard gratuity. There is another important point here. The authorities had the right to appoint each servant, who was then sworn into his job95 The position was coveted; the candidates often had ties to their predecessors or other officials. Tobias Sparff was uncle to Johan Jacobsson Eremith, accountant at the Stockholm post office during the years of Sparff’s employment. In their applications for the job, the Litzenbrüder refer to kinship.

The lower ranks in the postal system thus received minimal wages or remuneration. These positions were held by people of a lower social standing, with no aspirations or prospects of rising through ranks. There is no example of a post-farmer or postilion eventually becoming a postmaster. Instead, most were employed where they already lived, along the postal routes, in their home-towns. Probably all of them regularly supplemented their income by taking on a variety of side-lines, correspondingly local in nature, and as part of which people need to know the post servant personally. This local context usually was far away from Stockholm; it does not feature in the archives. As long as these extra-official

91 Kanslikollegium, C II, vol. 5, RA.
92 Tobias Sparff to K. Maj:t, 1696, Kammararkivet, Likvidationer, serie 52–53, bunt 1 (Eremith), RA, "The messengers choose the best letters on the post’s arrival, mostly those that might earn them a penny. They begrudge me a bread penny. Therefore I beg Your Royal Majesty graci-ously to help me as a poor man and give me a letter of recommendation to the Royal Chancery Board and secretary Åkerhielm, who then will give me a letter of referral to the post office that I might take letters like all the others, who enter the office whenever they want to."
93 Chancery Board to post director von Beijer, 28 November 1697, Kanslikollegium, C II, vol. 5, RA.
94 Draft of the post budget, 1694, Kanslikollegium, G IV, vol. 1, RA.
95 Rep. 3: Nr. 4645, Stadtsarchiv Stralsund, oath by Litzenbruder Jochim Reimer, 28 May 1664, who promised to deliver letters and other articles, honestly, diligently, and without favour.
activities did not exceed a certain quantity or time, and did not affect the general functioning of the post, the Chancery Board probably saw no reason to react decidedly. There is no indication that the Chancery Board or any other institution took conclusive measures to abolish customary side-lines or the second mailbags. There are no examples of a postilion or post-farmer being severely punished or dismissed because of irregularities relating to the second mailbags.

The situation for the postmasters was similar in that they, too, frequently had strong local ties before acquiring the postmastership. There is vague evidence that they engaged in similar side-lines, sending letters that were left off the official manifest and thus not included in their official accounts. They also received perquisites, which will be discussed below. But both of these activities seem too restricted and uncertain to serve as a reason for their interest in working for the post. The postmasters’ incomes therefore have to be explained differently. To start with, it is worth looking at one particular appointment: the postmastership in Kalmar in 1703. This case-study highlights certain aspects that are vital in understanding the postmasters’ finances.

Rules of appointment – the Kalmar postmastership, 1703

The search for a successor for Hans Wölck, postmaster and post inspector in Kalmar, shows both the social and financial aspects of these positions well. Kalmar’s post office was number five in Sweden proper, after Stockholm, Gothenburg, Jönköping, and Norrköping, with an annual wage of 260 dr sm. The well-documented application process offers insight into the administrative routines – and touches on the question of the postmasters’ merits prior to their employment.

Wölck’s case is particularly suitable for our purpose as many of the letters explicitly set out the various problems associated with the position. These include the rules under which the postmaster would operate, which were mentioned frequently, probably in an effort to change them. A number of candidates contemplated travelling up to court in Stockholm in order to present their case in person. Despite all the bureaucratic routines, the court was still perceived as an important meeting-place that heavily relied on physical presence. Even the possibility of greasing the odd palm, and how to go about it, were openly

96 See especially Kongelige och andra wederbörandes förordningar angående postväsendet (1707), post statute of 16 February 1707, pp. 257–260, which spells out the importance of the official manifest. This may be a reference to postmasters who dispatched letters under the counter, but there is no evidence with which to analyze such illegal behaviour.

97 This list refers to the post budget for Sweden proper. In the Swedish provinces, there were a number of large post offices: Riga, Reval, Stettin, Stralsund, Hamburg, and Helsingborg. Teodor Holm collected all available information on the revenues of the Swedish post offices, starting in 1681 (Manuskriptsamlingen, vol. 201, RA).

98 The possible effects of such journeys are not discussed here as any source material is not held in the Chancery Board’s archive.

discussed.\textsuperscript{100} In light of this frankness, it is all the more surprising that possible concerns about the postmaster’s wages and other sources of income were not mentioned at all. Every candidate seems to have been confident that the financial aspects of the position would be satisfactory, at least.

Applying at the right moment, the right way

On 16 February 1703, post clerk Anders Palm wrote to postmaster general Johan Schmedeman. He had learned that Hans Wölck ‘seems to be afflicted with a severe disease’.\textsuperscript{101} Palm petitioned to be appointed in his place, ‘if something fatal should happen to him’. He was aware that there would be a lot of candidates, but was all the more certain of success, because he depended on Schmedeman’s promotion, who was well-known for showing his servants a ‘commendable affection’. Palm went on to refer to his nine years ‘in waiting’ at the post office in Stockholm as a clerk.

Crown offices were assigned for life. In consequence, the death of a Crown servant sparked a fierce competition for the succession, not least because the Crown had an interest in filling the office as soon as possible. It was therefore essential to react to rumours of a Crown servant’s imminent death. In return, a great many Crown servants tried to prepare themselves for their deaths by handing on their offices within the family during their lifetime. Wölck, however, did not have a son who could take over his position: his son Hans was a year old, if that.

Wölck duly died on 1 March 1703. The ensuing process to choose his successor as postmaster, a position for which about a dozen candidates applied, also involved a huge number of additional actors. The right of appointment was the Chancery Board’s, including the postmaster general and a number of high-ranking officers in the post. Then there were the civil servants and ‘friends’ if the candidates, who tried to influence the process to suit their own particular interests. The result was often an unexpected and – for most spectators – random decision, because they could not determine what had been decisive in the long run.

It was advisable to apply in good time for a Crown office. Palm’s application was actually the first to arrive, almost a full fortnight before Wölck’s death. Most other candidates waited until he was actually dead. In order to be able to react fast, they had to be in Kalmar or to enjoy good relations with possible corres-

\textsuperscript{100} Hermann Müller enclosed an assurance with his application that read, ‘If Mons. Hermann Müller is obliged with the vacant position of a postmastership in Kalmar, I will immediately pay the bearer of this paper 60 ducats in coin, Stockholm, 13 March 1703, Joh. Torstenson.’ (ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 4, vol. 1, RA).

\textsuperscript{101} Here and hereafter, ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 4, vol. 1, RA.
pondents who were both reliable and close-lipped. Palm lived in the capital, but he obviously had a news source in Kalmar.

There was another application from Stockholm, written two days before Wölck died. Samuel Fagrell had worked for many years in Elisabeth Oxenstierna’s household. He was therefore unable to refer to previous Crown service, a serious flaw for the most part. But he could balance this with a letter of recommendation from Elisabeth Oxenstierna, grand-daughter of chancellor Axel Oxenstierna and so a member of one of Sweden’s finest houses. Elisabeth Oxenstierna wrote of Fagrell’s aptitude and his previous service for herself and her late husband, without giving any details. She added that Fagrell had asked her to write at this time: ‘because he hopes to be able to forestall other applications’.

The first two weeks after Wölck’s death demonstrated the need for haste. In short order, ten applications made their way to the Chancery Board or to Schmedeman, most of them having originated in Kalmar. Schmedeman, who was a member of the Chancery Board, was believed to have a strong influence on the appointment, as was openly stated by Palm and other candidates. They wrote to convince Schmedeman to prove their belief in his influence to be true. However, Schmedeman could not possibly appoint all of ‘his’ candidates: there were far too many candidates counting on his influence and their good relationship with him. Besides, he was just one, albeit pre-eminent, player in this game.

The candidates usually opened their letters by announcing that the postmaster in Kalmar had recently died. There was some appropriate expression of surprise at this, although they most likely were well prepared. It was not only advisable to send in an application straight away; it was equally important to send a letter of recommendation, as about every second candidate did. On 5 March Lars Collijn, treasurer in Kalmar, asked his superior, baron Hans Clerck, admiral and county governor, for a letter of recommendation, excusing himself for being late because he had been in the country and thus missed the post day. Since 1 March was a Monday, and the post left Kalmar twice weekly, most likely on Tuesday and Friday, sending in a letter of recommendation thus required diligent preparation, especially to activate high-placed friends and superiors.

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102 Elisabeth Oxenstierna (1655–1721), widow of Gustav Adolf de la Gardie (1641–1695), had been maid of honour at the court of queen dowager Hedvig Eleonora.

103 As there were two different addressees, the application papers are currently held in different sections of the national archives: Kanslikollegium, G II h, vol. 3, RA, for letters to the Chancery Board; and ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 4, vol. 1, RA, for letters addressed to the director general.

104 These petitions are for the most part undated, but given the date of their presentation they were presumably written on 2 or 3 March 1703.

105 The postmaster’s widow in Skara complained about his successor Lars Trana. Even before her husband had ‘surrendered his soul, Trana had secretly made his way to Mariestad’ in order to receive a letter of recommendation from the county governor (Grape 1951, p. 433).

106 Several petitions refer to letters of recommendation that have either been detached or were never delivered in the first place.
top of this, the candidates’ interest in ensuring the correct phrasing of their recommendation makes it probable that they drafted (if not wrote) the letters themselves in advance. It usually described the candidate in much the same way as the application. In addition, it contained a short evaluation of the candidate’s character, enumerating his virtues, and how well or for how long the writer had known the candidate.

These letters carried weight. It was not easy to succeed without a recommendation; all it took was for one other candidate to send in one. The recommender announced his interest in the position, although not for himself. The result was that the candidate’s merits were improved upon, because he could reinforce his own interest with that of his benefactor. The latter’s social status and influence at court was thus of the utmost importance. On the other hand, there were often several recommenders whose efforts had little noticeable effect. All this contributed to the general lack of transparency in the appointment process. The Chancery Board could not ignore them without running the risk of irritating their writers.107

Most of the applications were framed as petitions. Their rhetoric was exceedingly humble and stressed the candidate’s subservience. The petitions were mostly undated. Instead, the day of their presentation in the Chancery Board was noted on the letter. As most of the petitions were not presented in person, they were most likely attached to another letter, sent to a carefully selected contact at the Chancery Board, who was expected to present the petition to the Chancery Board at the right moment. More often than not this contact was the postmaster general, but it could also be a secretary or any other Crown servant deemed influential enough in these matters.108 Despite an elaborate bureaucratic routine, in almost all public matters contemporaries put a great deal of trust in these personal contacts. And they did so openly, naming their friends and benefactors in high places in their applications. Moreover, it was not customary to write to the institution itself without first ensuring the letter’s delivery through personal channels. The attached recommendations not only served to prove the candidate’s aptitude; they were primarily meant to ensure that the letter would receive the necessary attention and favourable reception in the Chancery Board.

Consequently, former post clerk Hindrich Diurbom excused himself in his letter to Schmedeman for being unknown to him. Most candidates went out of their way to emphasize the fact that Schmedeman had known them for a long time, and that on several occasions he had assured them of his good wishes. There were also candidates who did not mention any such personal contacts at

107 Samuel Åkerhielm to Josias Cederhielm, Stockholm, 11 June 1701, in Olsson 1979, pp. 31–34, on the difficulties of dealing with various recommendations and interests.
108 This is the most likely explanation for today’s division of the material. The archive of the director general was a mixture of private and institutional archive.
all. They were mostly without any real prospect of being appointed: their letters are often devoid of any kind of annotation. The application process was therefore a mixture of bureaucratic routines, comparable to today’s appointments, and different efforts to bypass competitors with the help of friends. The latter approach not unknown today, of course, but it is frowned on now in a way that was unknown three centuries ago.

According to the Chancery Board’s routines, all application papers were bound together. On the wrapper, all candidates were listed, together with short remarks on their most important merits. This particular list finally contained fourteen names. Several candidates were not included in the list, some because their applications simply arrived too late, some perhaps because they could not convince anyone to present their petition to the Chancery Board.

The petitions followed a common structure. The applicant described his previous services for the Crown, either in an office in Kalmar or in Stockholm, in which case he had mostly worked for the post. However, most of the candidates lived in the deceased postmaster’s community or nearby. Their previous services did not follow any particular pattern. Among Sweden’s postmasters there were a variety of professions, although there were some clear favourites. Many postmasters were already employed as customs officers, councillors, or mayors. In the smaller towns, these positions were as a rule held concurrently, and were taken up simultaneously. A number of candidates applied for the Kalmar postmastership after having worked as a post clerk for some time. That was considered an advantage because the Chancery Board honoured previous experience. In the present case, the candidates included a cashier, a clerk, a treasurer, a councillor, and several post clerks; there was also a former post clerk and other low-ranking servants. All of them expected the appointment would be a substantial improvement for them, financially as well as socially. Moreover, the position was thought of as a reward for previous commitments to the Crown. Deliberations about this element of reward were prominent. Post treasurer Lars Skragge recommended his old clerk Hindrich Diurbom in light of the good example his promotion would give to young clerks, who as a result would be encouraged to ‘work with the greatest assiduousness to be remembered and promoted later on’.

Many candidates wrote in detail about their present positions. In the present case, they mostly emphasized their poor wages as well as the fact that they had a

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109 Undated, ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 4, vol. 1, RA. The list contains information from 1704, indicating that it was maintained for some time. Not all applications mentioned in the list can be found in the file; it is not known when the applications were divided between the director general’s and the Chancery Board’s archives.

110 The following statistical data is taken from the study by Grape 1951.

111 This was how Skragge framed his argument to the director general to the Chancery Board. Skragge had written an extensive memorandum for Diurbom, Stockholm, 13 January 1704, ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 3 A, vol. 1, RA.
family and many young children. The business of describing their financial and private problems was an appeal to the Chancery Board’s obligation to take care of Crown servants. In consequence, complaints about financial distress in Crown offices were rather common. It was a valid argument, which probably tallied with the Chancery Board’s expectations. An appointment was perceived to be a reward for previous service, where the servant had adhered to the office even though the wage was supposedly too small to support a family.

Besides, there was an expectation that the Crown should graciously look after those of its servants who could no longer perform their duties properly due to advancing years or sickness. Anders Skragge had been post clerk in Stockholm for almost thirty years. He applied for Wölck’s postmastership by explicitly describing his declining health and his problems working the night shift. His application was accompanied by a memorandum penned by Stockholm’s postmaster, Hans Köhn, his superior. In January 1703, Köhn had finally decided to alert Schmedeman to the many mistakes and ensuing problems that Skragge’s disease had been causing for a number of years: Skragge should be retired on half wages, the other half to be paid to a young clerk, who could replace Skragge after his death. Skragge himself asked that he might not be retired, but instead appointed to a vacant postmastership. This request was taken seriously, and explains why Köhn’s memorandum is today among the application papers. Neither sickness nor old age was sufficient reason to remove a servant from his office, while a pension must be considered an exception rather than a rule. Moreover, Anders Palm wrote on 12 March, a mere week after most of the candidates’ applications had arrived in Stockholm, to apply to succeed Anders Skragge as post clerk, because he was supposed to become postmaster in Kalmar. We cannot determine where Palm got this (erroneous) information, but he obviously deemed it plausible, although he knew Skragge personally and was well aware of his failing ability to do his job. The postmastership was a reward; another person, paid by the postmaster himself, could then execute the work.

As well as the candidates who already held Crown positions, there were several candidates who were ‘external’. Their applications were often framed differently because they had to gloss over this obvious deficiency. Samuel Fagrell

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112 It is not clear whether Anders Skragge was in any way related to Lars Skragge. The archive shows no evidence of Lars making any effort to promote Anders, which would have been normal if they had been relatives.
113 Around 1700, the postal administration paid two pensions within Sweden (to the widow of the postmaster in Åbo and to a former messenger) and a small number of pensions for former servants in the provinces or for people who had been affiliated to the post in different ways (see the post budget of 1694, Kanslikollegium, G IV, vol. 1, RA).
114 Grape’s catalogue of postmasters occasionally mentions employees who performed postal services in the postmaster’s name, especially when the postmaster could not fulfil his postal duties because he was away or was busy about his other official business. We can assume that this kind of arrangement was actually far more common, but the postmasters had no reason to mention it to the director general, because each had to pay his stand-in out of his own pocket.
is strikingly vague about his previous service and merits. He relied totally on the recommendation of Elisabeth Oxenstierna, according to the Chancery Board’s list of candidates his only qualification: ‘Samuel Fagrell, was particularly recommended by countess Oxenstierna.’115

Joachim von Faltzow, a Kalmar merchant, referred to the fact that he had been a citizen of Kalmar for about two decades and that he had paid his taxes in all these years. He then stated that his ‘small luck’ had deserted him when French privateer seized the ship in which he had invested all his fortune. von Faltzow threw himself on the Crown’s mercy and compassion.116 Other petitions emphasized ties of kinship. Councillor Mathias Morin was Wölck’s brother-in-law; Alexander Möllenbrock was son of Kalmar’s former mayor. In both cases, kinship ties were mentioned in combination with other merits, in Möllenbrock’s case a poorly paid position in the tar company (which was a Crown office). Finally, there are some applications that do not mention any merits at all. Instead, they offer a specified amount of money as ‘a token of my gratitude’.117 These financial gifts varied in size, but were as large as 200 dr sk, which amounted to the most part of the first year’s wage.

The widow’s maintenance

Within two weeks of Wölck’s death about a dozen applications had reached the postmaster general and the Chancery Board. Still, in the following weeks nothing seems to have happened. The first formal decision was taken on 25 March, when the Chancery Board conceded that the widow might enjoy her year of grace. It was customary to support the widow and her children for a certain period of time. It was not unknown for a widow’s petition to emphasize this obligation, noting that the Chancery Board ‘used to consider the conditions of mourning widows’.118 Wölck’s widow accordingly promised to provide sureties and to employ a diligent man.

Up to the end of the seventeenth century, many widows had taken over their husbands’ postmasterships themselves, instead of being reduced to relying on the year of grace as a means of providing for themselves and their families. They became postmasters with the permission of the Chancery Board or its implicit

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115 Kanslikollegium, B I a, vol. 6, RA.
117 Lars Spylhammar to Schmedeman, Stockholm, 1 March 1704, ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 4, vol. 1, RA.
118 Ånka Engula Ercken, Pernau, 13 June 1699, to general post director Åkerhielm, ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 3 D, vol. 117, RA: ‘that the tears of widows and orphans, their prayers and sighs, will not go unheard’.

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This possibility disappeared eventually once women were deemed incapable of running these businesses, especially when it came to the necessary control of male employees and post-farmers. On 16 June 1691, Charles XI decreed that ‘in particular in the most important post offices it was necessary to employ competent and brave men, and that a great confusion had occurred in the office, because many widows have been retained in its administration.’ He ordered that no widow should be allowed to administer post offices. It took a few decades to fully implement this decision, but between 1722 and 1874 there were no female postmasters in Sweden, at least officially.

Still, even afterwards there remained a number of opportunities for widows to hang on to their positions, for example by marrying their late husband’s successor, in the which case the postmastership became a kind of dowry. The year of grace marked the expected period of mourning before the widow could remarry. In the present case, Wölck’s widow, Helena Collin, was about twenty-nine years old. She was a given candidate for a second marriage, if only because next to the post office itself she probably represented a major source of capital in the Kalmar post business.

Normally, the decision to grant the year of grace did not imply a decision on any successor, who was simply expected to account for the widow’s rights – to wait for one year, or to maintain the widow during that time. However, a successor was often appointed shortly afterwards. In this case, it took the Chancery Board two months to arrive at a decision: on 12 May Samuel Fagrell was granted the postmastership, in view of his glowing recommendations. However, it was conditional upon him choosing ‘to celebrate a Christian marriage’ with the widow. Fagrell was ordered to travel to Kalmar and to ‘search for an agreement thereto’. The Chancery Board assured him that it would be willing to supply him with the appropriate authorization – post facto. Fagrell thus received combined assurances for both widow and position. Neither then nor later did the Chancery Board give any explanation for tying the widow’s maintenance to the succession.

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119 According to an analysis by Lundgren 1987, 7–8 per cent of all postmasters in the seventeenth century were women, all of them postmasters’ widows.

120 16 June 1691, RR, RA, quoted in Lundgren 1987, p. 33.

121 Lundgren 1987, p. 32.

122 In a memorandum, Skragge recommended that the widow of postmaster Olof Andersson in Strängnäs should receive a year of grace so that she could find another ‘brave man’ in place of her husband (Skragge to Åkerhielm, Stockholm, 14 May 1702, ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 3 A, vol. 1, RA).

123 The post office in Kalmar was one of the largest in Sweden, with a large income. On top of that, Collin was the daughter of the mayor-cum-postmaster of Vimmerby.

124 The Chancery Board explained their decision in ‘Recommendations and testimonies, which have been made about foreman Samuel Fagrell, his capabilities and conditions’ (ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 4, vol. 1, RA).

125 This was particularly common for priests’ widows (Olsson 1979, p. 31).
Fagrell travelled to Kalmar and ‘publicized’ the Chancery Board’s pronouncement in order to end the competition for the postmastership. The other candidates were forced into silence, for the time being. Unfortunately, all of Fagrell’s attempts to approach the widow and to persuade her to marry him were fruitless. She obviously had not the least intention of doing so. Fagrell wrote several times to Schmedeman to tell him about his efforts. Other than a positive answer from the widow’s father, Nils Collin, mayor of the nearby town of Vimmerby, who according to Fagrell was well disposed towards him, everything had gone wrong:

I talked to the widow in person and visited her several times with my letters. Furthermore, I send an honourable priest to ask for a positive answer, but so far she has kept me waiting with mere words, as if her lamentable position and the memory after her late husband would not allow her to give any certain answer in these important matters after such short time.126

Fagrell seems to have interpreted the widow’s answer as a mere subterfuge. According to him, she had even applied for an extension to her year of grace.127 In consequence, Fagrell asked Schmedeman to order him to send in his sureties, which was considered a certain sign of his imminent assumption to the postmastership. Fagrell obviously hoped that the widow would realize that he really was going to take over. In the summer of 1703, the first rumours about Fagrell’s failure became public. Johan Dahlman, treasurer of Kalmar’s fortifications, wrote in August 1703 that he had heard that the widow would keep the postmastership ‘until she could be provided for by way of a marriage’. He then offers to enter into marriage with her, adding as an explanation:

We not only are close neighbours. I used to stand in good friendship and particular trust with the house of the late Wölck for a long time. For this reason, I am sure that the widow will ponder much more on my person, who for a long time and still holds an honourable Crown office, than on any other person, who might be of less merit, or on Monsieur Fagrell, who everywhere spreads the news that he had received an affirmation of the widow and the office, although in this city he has only small countenance.128

Dahlman also writes about his other merits, and adds a letter of recommendation by one captain Brunian. Already several weeks before this letter, Dahlman’s brother-in-law, Gustav Otto Lindbladh, captain at the Gothenburg

126 Samuel Fagrell to Schmedeman, Kalmar, 8 October 1703, ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 4, vol. 1, RA.
127 ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 4, vol. 1, RA. She applied on 24 September 1703; it seems that she did not receive any reply to her request.
fortifications, had approached Schmedeman with a letter recommending Dahlman, and claiming that he had been informed of the widow’s flat refusal to marry Fagrell.

The widow never explained herself, either in regard to her rumoured suitors or her reasons for not remarrying. We can therefore only make assumptions about her behaviour. As her private reasons had little bearing on the Chancery Board’s decisions, her romantic feelings will have to be passed over in silence. The Chancery Board tried to arrange for her maintenance; the candidates wanted to lay their hands on a desirable office that had been tied to the widow’s marriage bed. There was hardly any margin for romantic ideals about love in the Chancery Board’s way of handling the situation. However, the widow’s maintenance assumed a decisive role in the application process. The Chancery Board could have appointed a successor without recognizing the widow’s interests, as it had frequently done before. It obviously did not want, or did not dare, to force the widow into marriage. There are several observations to be made here. For one, Fagrell had the financial means to invest a great deal of time in the pursuit of his interests. Two, he must have had high expectations regarding the possible income that the post office would generate, given that he offered the postmaster general 200 dr sk if his application was successful. Three, the Chancery Board approved of the widow’s pretensions to a position to which she could not be appointed officially. This recognition obviously referred to the financial side of the postmastership, not its legal ramifications, because as a widow she was not expected to have legal pretensions.

Due to Fagrell’s well-known problems, several new or updated applications arrived at the beginning of 1704. Instead of mentioning the late postmaster’s death, they now wrote that they had heard about the ‘position still being vacant’. Treasurer of the post, Lars Skragge, twice sent a strong recommendation for his former clerk Hindrich Diurbom, who had served as a clerk in Stockholm’s post office for nine years. Diurbom had already sent his application, relying heavily on the recommendation by Skragge, who determinedly promoted his application for the postmaster general: ‘My honourable brother will most likely want to help Diurbom in the light of my intervention, as this is the first time ever I recommended someone.’ This was perhaps not the best way to work on Schmedeman, as every recommendation intruded on someone else’s interests.

129 Only two years before another widow had tried to prolong her service beyond her year of grace, referring to other widows who had succeeded in doing so (Maria Elfvendahl to Samuel Åkerhielm, Narva, 14 July 1701, ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 3 D, vol. 107, RA).
130 ‘If the widow of the late post inspector in Kalmar, Hans Wölck, could be assisted to a brave husband who were to succeed the last one in service and bed, she would benefit hugely.’ Skragge to Schmedeman, Stockholm, 28 November 1703, ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 3 A, vol. 1, RA.
131 Fagrell to Schmedeman, Stockholm, 14 March 1703, ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 4, vol. 1, RA.
132 Director general Schmedeman and Skragge finally had a major falling out in 1704–1705 over Skragge’s efforts to interfere with Schmedeman’s work (Holm 1906–1929, v. pt. 1, pp. 93–94).
Only now, 6 March 1704, one year after Wölck’s death, did the application arrive that ultimately would be successful. Lars Eriksson Rosenlund applied to continue with the postmastership, which he already had had for thirty-four years. Rosenlund was the late Wölck’s stepfather. He had assigned his postmastership to Wölck in 1692, with the Chancery Board’s approval, to ensure the maintenance of his stepson and family.

Lars Rosenlund was probably born in 1629 and took on the postmastership in Kalmar in 1658.133 He was also mayor and town treasurer, thus holding several offices and most likely substantial incomes. His wife, Catharina Hindrichsdotter Welsyn, had at least one child from a previous marriage: Hans Wölck. When Rosenlund in 1692 assigned his postmastership to Wölck, he tried to keep it in the family. Wölck received the postmastership, but not for free. A memorandum attached to Rosenlund’s petition in 1704 mentioned that Rosenlund ‘received some support and allowance’ from Wölck. He kept a part of the revenues, without having to bother with the post at all.

There are several examples of similar contracts in the same family that assured the old postmaster of a substantial part of the revenues. They, too, demonstrate that Rosenlund perceived the position as his private property that he was able to ‘sell’ under certain conditions and with the Chancery Board’s approval.134 These contracts lasted for the old postmaster’s lifetime; only then would the postmastership be assigned for good to his successor. Everybody involved in this kind of contract clearly counted on the principal’s death. Even Rosenlund did so quite openly in 1704, when he applied to be restored to his previous office. He mentioned both his old age and the fact that he probably had only a few years to live. He, too, asked that the widow might keep the postmastership, which she offered to have operated by an acting postmaster under Rosenlund’s supervision. By these means he sought to allay his greatest fear: ‘I and my relatives will be locked out from office by someone unknown’.135 His own family played a decisive role in his petition. Both he and his stepson had invested in the position, the post-house, the gear, and the like. His house had accommodated the post for almost fifty years. Hans Wölck obviously had lived at his stepfather’s home even after he had married Helena Collin. And she lived with her stepfather after Wölck’s dead.

It was fairly common for a postmastership to be handed down within a family, or for the old postmaster to be restored in those cases where a chosen

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133 All information on Kalmar’s postmasters is taken from Grape 1951, p. 207. Grape has Wölch instead of Wölck; Holm 1906–1929, v. pt. 1 describes this episode in Kalmar’s postal history, and duly refers to him as Wöllsch.
134 Rosenlund went on to do this again, in 1707, when he transferred his postmastership to his successor Olof Reppler, keeping half the salary for himself (Grape 1951, p. 207).
135 Rosenlund elaborates on this idea in the undated memorandum attached to his similarly undated letter to the Chancery Board, presented on 6 March 1704, in which he asked for his maintenance (Kanslikollegium, G II h, vol. 3, RA).
successor predeceased him. What was unusual in this case, however, was that Rosenlund’s petition arrived so late, and that the Chancery Board did not consider his interests before that point. Rosenlund might have concurred with the Chancery Board’s efforts to maintain the widow with the help of a new marriage, and only announced his interest when there was no hope of a marriage with Fagrell or any other candidate. His move certainly safeguarded the widow’s control of the position as well as his share of the revenues, albeit only for his remaining lifetime. It also enabled Helena Collin to avoid remarrying altogether. She was to die a widow on 8 August 1711, together with her then nine-year-old son Hans Wölck and her mother Margareta Prytz, most likely of the plague.136 She died in Vimmerby, to where she obviously had returned. Her father, Nils Collin, was still mayor there.

The somewhat complicated arrangement by which Rosenlund set out to regain his hold on the postmastership, only to have it run by his stepdaughter, who in turn employed a ‘diligent man’ to operate it, was openly presented for the Chancery Board. A widow could not be appointed postmaster, although she could perform the duties of office all the same; Ernst Grape mentions a number of examples where the postmaster’s wife had the day-to-day running, or where he was forced to surrender the position after his wife’s death because he himself could neither write nor read.137 The Chancery Board saw no obstacles to Rosenlund’s proposed solution, and made it official on 24 September 1704. At this point Rosenlund was already seventy-five years old and, according to his own testimony, physically disabled, frail, and thus incapable of performing his postal duties, or any other come to that.

Rosenlund ‘performed’ the office of postmaster – or rather disposed of its revenues – for three years. When he assigned it to a new postmaster, Olof Reppler, in 1707, Helena Collin was not mentioned at all, although she was still alive.138 Even Fagrell was not considered, although the Chancery Board had renewed its affirmation of his succession in 1704, under which he was to take over the position after Rosenlund’s death.139 The whole time Rosenlund’s death was thought to be imminent, and with it the end of the widow’s tenure. Fagrell, however, could not afford or did not want to wait. He never became postmaster in Kalmar. He died in Halltorp on 20 May 1740, as an inspector in Södra Wärneby, 20–30 kilometres south of Kalmar. It is unclear why Rosenlund gave up the service during his lifetime. There is no information on Reppler, be it his

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137 Grape 1951, p. 783. This explanation was offered in a petition by Peter Ohrn, who wished to succeed postmaster Michael Eckerman on Åland (undated, probably 1709, OPD, Huvudarkivet, E 4, vol. 1, RA).
138 There was no reason given for Reppler’s appointment, who most likely was chosen by Rosenlund himself. He was not on the list of applicants in 1703–1704.
139 3 September 1704, Kanslikollegium, A IIa, vol. 22, RA.
birth, previous service, or merits, neither do we know the Chancery Board’s reasons for appointing him. Rosenlund’s wish was enough to secure Reppler’s appointment. It is likely that Reppler had been the acting postmaster since 1704.

Other than the issue of the Chancery Board’s duplicity in discussing the succession, which will be addressed later, the appointment of Rosenlund thus highlights different notions of merit and qualification. Crown servants and their families’ interests were upheld come what may, even if that meant employing a seventy-five-year-old man in poor health and a thirty-year-old widow who refused to bow to the Chancery Board’s efforts to marry her off in order to keep her in business. This is all the more surprising since Rosenlund’s appointment cannot have been anything but temporary. It meant ignoring a number of younger and more qualified candidates who might have enjoyed the position for a long time. This decision neither coincides with notions of a modern bureaucracy nor reflects the Chancery Board’s discussions about candidates’ necessary qualifications. There was a clear call for language skills, industry, previous service, and the like; language skills in particular were highly treasured in light of the necessary correspondence within and outside Sweden. However, ties of kinship and the maintenance of the late postmaster’s family weighed heavily, too. This patrimonial care for Crown servants was not an absolute priority, but it was certainly a strong argument – and it was by no means limited to poor servants. There is no indication that the Chancery Board perceived this modus operandi as an obstacle in its efforts to improve the postal organization. The interesting question is whether these additional arguments follow one or more distinct lines of reasoning, or whether they have to be considered unsuitable in light of the interests of the Chancery Board and the post.

Wages, honour, and privileges

The appointment in Kalmar shows distinct similarities to proceedings for other post servants, indeed for other Crown servants. In seeking appointment, the postmasters built on existing social relationships in their localities. These social relationships probably had a financial element to them as well, which would explain why merchants who were not their kin often stood surety for them. However, postmasters did not discuss the financial conditions of their service in detail, merely complaining about the size of the sureties required, whereas the Chancery Board frequently deemed them insufficient or invalid. The Chancery Board’s ordinances simply stated that the postmaster ‘in order to be able to fulfil his office, shall enjoy the wages and income that are mentioned in the post

140 Widowhood was associated with poverty in the popular mind, because a widow lacked the protection a husband offered, not to mention his financial support.
141 Kammarkollegiet, Kansliet, J IIa, vol. 1, Kautionsarkivet. Aktuariens mem. 1693–1706, RA, contains many files detailing such sureties.
budget, together with the honour and privileges that are part of the office'. What these ‘honour and privileges’ might be, and whether they implied anything more than an official recognition of the postmaster’s social position, is unclear. It is possible it referred to a tax exemption, which was still customary in Pomerania in 1695 when Lange conducted his tour of inspection. Yet these were the tax exemptions that had caused trouble in Sweden – with towns complaining about the fact that it was only their richest citizens who became postmasters and who thus inflicted a substantial loss on the town – and were no longer customary. The ordinances mention no details.

**A profitable marriage – cashing in symbolic capital**

One explanation that was mentioned repeatedly in discussions about the Crown servants’ somewhat obscure finances was a profitable marriage. This argument relies heavily on the assumption that Crown servants already had at their disposal a substantial symbolic capital that made them extremely eligible. Marriage would bring the financial capital that a Crown servant did not himself possess. The most likely marriage partner was the infamous ‘rich merchant’s daughter’ or – less common – the rich merchant himself, marrying the late postmaster’s daughter or widow. Even if we temporarily ignore the nagging question of whether there were enough rich merchants to go round, willing and able to provide their children with dowries large enough to compensate for the postmasters’ unsound finances, we have to assume that there must have been a financial advantage for them as well: it does not seem much of an investment to stake a fortune on a postmaster’s career if this position was usually the pinnacle of a man’s career. And true, most postmasters remained in service for life, preferably handing it on to their eldest sons. A handful of postmasters in the capital cities were eventually ennobled (von Beijer, Vatky-Rosencrut, Cannolt-Treuenfels), but in the normal run of things it was rare for postmasters to be ennobled – or promoted. Neither did postmasters’ families experience a rise in social standing in the next generation. No, a postmastership was coveted for returns that were in and of itself.

In his work on the Swedish and Danish military command in the eighteenth century, Fredrik Thisner makes a similar argument for the role of marriage in

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142 This is the usual phrasing in the Chancery Board’s archive, in this case for postmaster Lars Winge in Örebro, 23 March 1685, Kanslikollegium, C II, vol. 1, RA).
143 Postmaster Palthenius to post inspector Lange, Greifswald, 7 January 1695, extract by Lange in his report to the Chancery Board, Kanslikollegium, G II:f, vol. 2, RA.
144 Stockholm, 16 February 1707, Kongelige och andra wederbörandes förordningar angående postväsendet (1707).
146 In the latter instance, it was often a widower who married widows.
147 Grape 1953 offers many examples of this kind of inheritance.
the equally unreliable incomes of Swedish military officers. However, he does not seem to be entirely convinced himself. Military service was even more prestigious than the post, but it seems a bit far-fetched to assume that every new generation of officers was obliged to safeguard their finances by marrying well, while everyone knew their financial situation to be precarious. Certainly there was a symbolic gain involved, both in acquiring a postmastership and in marrying well, and this gain amounted to what the postal ordinances would have viewed as honour, while it obviously served as some kind of credit; yet be that as it may, this credit had to be displayed in public life, every day. This display of credit and reputation depended on the financial resilience of the individual Crown servant – for which the Crown did not pay.

The marriage argument therefore seems somewhat strained, for although a number of postmasters did marry into merchant families, that was hardly unique for members of a local elite in Europe. Moreover, it was Helena Collin who had been the financially attractive party in the various candidates’ marital plans, and while not a single one went into the details, the Chancery Board’s goal was obviously to keep her in office. The candidates themselves perceived the marriage as part of a reward for services rendered.

**Perquisites**

The system of perquisites appears in many respects to be old-fashioned and arbitrary.

There was another element in civil servants’ incomes that is of importance here – perquisites (**sportler**). This system was common in most early modern states, despite occasional complaints as to their number. Björn Asker and other historians emphasize that this was a legal way of improving wages in Sweden as elsewhere; yet their analysis is somewhat flawed by their misgivings. Asker depicts perquisites as an outmoded, unpredictable system, and given his interest in bureaucratic modernization, of which Sweden is thought a shining example, it is true that perquisites do not quite fit with the broader picture. Pär Frohnert shares this perspective, using Weber’s bureaucratization paradigm as a template in which perquisites have the features of a ‘pre-bureaucratic pattern’. Frohnert depicts Sweden as a comparatively modern bureaucracy that had retained perquisites and other features of the ‘pre-bureaucratic’ state (the sale of offices, nepotism, and offices’ heritability). He explains these ‘leftovers’ by referring to

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148 Thisner 2007; Frohnert 1993, pp. 89–90, discusses the same problem with regard to civil servants.
the low wages and the lack of a pension system, which was introduced only in
1770. Asker and the others seem to be disturbed by the perquisite invisibility.
Why ‘hide’ them in the archives, if they were legal? And how important were
they for Crown servants?

In 1966, Göran Rystad published the first study on offices and salaries in Swe-
den’s Age of Liberty (1718–1772), in which he analysed different perquisites as
well as the civil administration’s rules for distributing them among its per-
sonnel.¹⁵¹ Maria Cavallin has continued his line of reasoning, and has arrived at
some precise figures. Unfortunately, however, the sums involved fall below the
level of income that she defines as the subsistence minimum. Furthermore, she
has doubts over Rystad’s conclusion that perquisites could augment wages by as
much as fifty per cent, agreeing instead with Frohnert, who takes a less
optimistic view, not least because there have been institutions with only a few
perquisites, or none at all.¹⁵²

The calculations by Rystad and others cannot claim to be representative for
the Swedish administration on the whole. Frohnert states simply that it is
impossible to put a specific figure on the sums involved, and although Asker and
Cavallin share this insight to varying degrees, their conclusions differ substan-
tially. Cavallin and Rystad do at least imply that the Crown servants’ finances
depended on illegal assets, while Asker states that the regulation of perquisites
does not mean that bribery was abolished.¹⁵³ Cavallin writes that the resources
that Crown servants administered on behalf of the Crown and that they disposed
of for their own benefit were not clearly delimited – that is, they took advantage
of public money.¹⁵⁴ Rystad first claims that the fact that a number of Crown
servants did not have official wages did not mean that they had no income.¹⁵⁵ He
then distinguishes between perquisites that were legal and official, and those
such as gifts, bribes, and so on. The Chancery Board ordinances strictly forbade
the latter in 1720, and again in 1773.¹⁵⁶ Rystad stops short of claiming that Crown
servants usually lived on illegal perquisites, but that in effect is what he is saying.

The assumption that Crown servants’ finance were largely based on regular
illegal incomes and that this system stayed intact for several centuries does not
convince Frohnert, though. His inference is that perquisites amounted to
considerable sums – although there is hardly any trace of them in the sources.¹⁵⁷
He has obviously no evidence for such a ‘solution’, but seems to reject the notion
of an inherently corrupt bureaucracy on basis of its inanity. A corrupt bureau-
cracy, to give it its true name, that for centuries succeeded in living up to highest

¹⁵¹ Rystad 1966.
¹⁵² Cavallin 2003, p. 63.
¹⁵⁴ Cavallin 2003, p. 65.
¹⁵⁶ Rystad 1966, p. 164.
¹⁵⁷ Frohnert 1993, pp. 86–87.
expectations with regard to efficiency and rationality simply does not make sense to Frohnert. It is hard to argue in the total absence of evidence, but there ought to be many more complaints about perquisites and corruption in the civil administration than we have in early modern Sweden. Asker’s example – about excessive administrative fees – dates from 1654, a time when most offices did not pay fixed and reliable wages. Corruption existed, but there is no indication that it accounted for a substantial and reliable part of the Crown servants’ income. Perquisites were legal; they cannot simply be written off as corruption.

Although we have to assume that perquisites played a role in the postmasters’ finances, there remains one major problem. There is little indication of the kind of perquisites postmasters were able or allowed to charge. They are mentioned occasionally, and seem to have applied to every single letter. But how? Is it possible that postmasters regularly received an additional fee for registered letters?\(^{158}\) In this case, customers wanted to make sure that their letters were treated preferentially. This argument implies that an ordinary letter would be at a disadvantage of some sort to make preferential treatment meaningful. What could such treatment involve, when there were just one or two days of mail traffic a week? The archive does not give any answers.

The importance of perquisites might be guessed at from post commissar Schneider’s bitter complaint about his insufficient wages in Helsingør. His 400 rdr a year were not paid regularly, and, on top of that, he did not receive any perquisites at all.\(^{159}\) This lack can be explained by his position in Helsingør, for while he had a vital role in Sweden’s international contacts, his work as a Swedish postmaster in Denmark meant he was forbidden to take in letters for posting: they had to be posted with the Danish postmaster.

### A civil tenure system

Schneider not only lacked the perquisites that other postmasters obviously counted on. He asked the chancery board for the reimbursement of his claims on the Crown because he had not received his wages for a number of years, although the costs of living as befitted a Swedish commissar in Denmark were substantial. What was Schneider living on? He does not mention any kind of income. The estate inventories for the county of Malmöhus, however, show that he held several Crown estates in the province of Skåne that were probably the basis of his finances.\(^{160}\)

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\(^{159}\) Kammararkivet, Likvidationer, series 52–53, vol. 1, RA, gives details of his losing balance sheets.

\(^{160}\) Schneider was granted estates in Salerup on 25 May 1658, (Kammararkivet, Jordeböcker, Malmöhus län 1665, RA). The grant is mentioned in the index to Riksregistraturet (the royal chancellery’s letter-books of outgoing correspondence), but not in Riksregistraturet itself.
Schneider is not a particularly helpful example because he was anything but an ordinary postmaster. Moreover, he was active in the 1660s and 1670s, before any reliable form of government wage was introduced. However, the post budgets did not put an end to the postmasters’ financial problems. Instead, they seem to have exacerbated them by reducing the postmasters’ incomes. The question is then whether postmasters continued to receive Crown land in exchange for their services, in a civil tenure system (civila indelningsverket) similar to the post-farmers’, or indeed to the military tenure system. The idea is striking, the evidence inconclusive at best. First, previous post historians do not mention such grants of land. Second, the Crown’s ordinances did not mention them either, although the ‘honour and privileges’ might at a pinch include them. Even in Wölck’s case, there is no reference to any form of landed property involved. Third, random samples of the Crown’s cadastral register (jordeböcker) have not produced any evidence of postmaster land, even though amidst the huge quantity of military land, there is some that was linked to a treasurer, a priest, and the like. But even if we could find any examples, why are they not mentioned in the postal archive or in connection with the postmasters’ appointments? In 1685, the Chancery Board appointed eight postmasters. Their letters of appointment are identical and highly formalized. They give no details about the postmasters’ payments, except for the usual phrase about honour and privileges. Neither do other records from that period. And if the new postmasters had such land at their disposal, why was it not referred to in their probate inventories? On the whole, it seems unlikely that a civil tenure organization did play much of a role in the postmasters’ finances.

The postmasters’ side-lines
All the evidence points to the fact that the postmasters’ income to a substantial degree came with the job. It was an income that did not come from the Chancery Board; neither did it have the Board’s explicit approval, although most likely its knowledge. It cannot have been levied arbitrarily; the post would not have been that popular otherwise. In 1672, Gottfried Albinus, an unemployed secretary in the Pomeranian government, complained about his financial problems by contrasting his situation to that of the postmaster in Stettin, Andreas Thomas

161 See the quote by von Beijer above, n. 10.
162 The cadastral registers do not usually give the name of the estate-owner. We cannot be sure that postmasters were provided for, even if the register for the county of Jönköping in 1703 mentions several estates as posthemman or ‘post-households’. A lengthy examination of the cadastral registers, which, incidentally, do not have indices of any kind, might come up with some evidence.
163 The Chancery Board’s registry, Kanslikollegium, C II, vol. 1, RA.
164 Neither Riksrégristraturet nor the Chancery Board’s archive lists any enfeoffments in connection with these postmasters’ appointments.
Hildebrand. According to Albinus, Hildebrand had a number of additional incomes on top of his job as a postmaster: in the previous year, he had sold grain to the granary in Stockholm; he had a number of estates with high revenues; and as well as his wage, ‘which he receives properly’, he had ‘perquisites, from which he manages to wring a fair bit, his seat in the chapter, in all an abundance of incomes to live on luxuriously with his family.’

This is more than a description of the numerous side-lines of a postmaster who came from a merchant family. It also shows that Albinus, who used Hildebrand as an example of what he hoped would soon be his proper payment, saw a connection between the postal business and regular merchant activities. He assumed, too, that a considerable part of Hildebrand’s income consisted of perquisites. Albinus was not the most impartial witness, of course, and he had good reason to exaggerate Hildebrand’s income, but that does not affect his trustworthiness as a whole. And he saw a clear connection between Hildebrand’s postal services and his business activities.

There are other examples of postmasters’ enterprise, although most describe dealings with the Crown. Post director Statius Stein in Riga traded in ship mastings; post commissar Huswedel in Hamburg supplied the Swedish high nobility with luxury goods from the Continent. Both involved substantial sums of money; both involved largely open trade between important harbours in and beyond the Swedish realm: they are hardly representative of postmasters’ unofficial activities in smaller towns. These are mostly invisible due to the lack of any private or merchant archive from that time. However, a royal ordinance of 1707 stipulated that postmasters were allowed to have additional sources of income for their own benefit, as long as it did not interfere with their work.

Stefan Brakensiek has studied civil servants in Hesse. He gives examples of the officials’ substantial involvement in the local credit market, thanks to the financial resources that they controlled as part of their work. Likewise, the Swedish postmasters administered the revenues of their post office. True, they were obliged to transfer these revenues to Stockholm eventually, after subtracting their wages, but most of them kept substantial sums in their post offices

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165 Gottfried Albinus to governor-general Carl Gustav Wrangel, Stettin, 25 June 1672, Skokloster samlingen, E 8191, RA.
166 Hildebrand was the son of Friedrich Hildebrand, postmaster in Elbing until 1657. Hildebrand senior had been an important merchant in Nuremberg, doing business with the Swedish army in the 1640s.
167 See Huswedel’s letters to Johan Rosenhane, E 524–527, UUB.
168 There are several letters by mayor and postmaster Petter Hummel in Varberg to governor-general Reinhold Johan von Fersen, 1707–1708 (Stafsundsarkivet, vol. 17, RA). While they confirm their business relationship, these sporadic letters are insufficient to describe Hummel’s side-lines in more detail.
for long periods, often for several years. It was clearly illegal to use the Crown’s resources for private gain, but there are a number of indications that it occurred regularly, albeit not without risks.  

In 1705, Johan Söderberg, postmaster in Anklam, was dismissed for being incapable and unreliable. In a letter to Schmedeman, post commissar Johann Vatky accused Söderberg among other things of threatening his wife when she refused to hand over the post’s cash-box. His wife not only seems to have run the post, which being Vatky’s daughter she probably knew inside out, she was also able to protect the post’s revenues from her husband, who in his work handling postage had embezzled public money. This example could be interpreted as an argument for a clear distinction between the public and the private resources of civil servants. However, when the Chancery Board in 1708 tried to change the reimbursement for gratis letters, Vatky-Rosencreutz gave an interesting explanation of why this would not work. According to the Chancery Board, Crown servants were supposed to pay for these letters in advance, and only afterwards would they be reimbursed, according to their accounts. Vatky-Rosencreutz responded that most Crown servants simply refused to do so, because they claimed that they could not afford it. Some maintained that they did not have any money available in their work to use for this purpose; others said that they were not allowed to use these resources. The Chancery Board obviously assumed that Crown servants regularly invested Crown revenue to other ends. Vatky-Rosencreutz decided to advance the money himself and send a balance to the Crown later. However, he gave up on this idea very quickly because the Crown did not pay him for months.  

When postmaster Nils Collin in Vimmerby took over the service after his son’s death in 1711, he explained his request by that he had some postal revenues lent out in the surrounding area. He stayed in office for one more year to make his debtors repay the money they had borrowed from him. It is particularly interesting, that Collin openly used his involvement in the credit market as an argument in favour of his being reinstated as postmaster.

In the late 1690s and early 1700s there are a number of postmasters who were unable to balance their accounts. It is reasonable to assume that they had invested the revenues improperly or simply without success. In a number of cases, this imbalance led to the postmaster’s dismissal, although usually only

\[\text{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{171} Cavallin 2003, p. 65, discusses this behaviour.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{172} Vatky to Schmedeman, Stralsund, 30 March 1705, ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 3 D, vol. 136, RA.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{173} Vatky-Rosencreutz to Schmedeman, Stralsund, 15 December 1708, ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 3 D, vol. 136, RA.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{174} Grape 1951, pp. 646–647, gives 5 August 1711, but the Vimmerby parish register gives 15 August.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{175} Grape 1951, p. 647.}\]
after years of correspondence with the Chancery Board. The latter, in fact, showed a great deal of patience and understanding, eventually reinstating some postmasters who had been downgraded for several years because of their financial failures. The sums involved must have been quite substantial, as they not only exceeded their wages but also the much higher sureties, which were more closely connected to the expected income. If any Crown servant of this standing died within a few years after taking a new position, his family was likely to encounter severe financial problems, something that in the postmasters’ case indicates that there was some kind of calculation on their part, based on the fact that Crown positions were granted for life and that they would stay in office long enough to offset the first years’ investments and the sureties.176

News as commodity and source of income

Why should postmasters in particular have had an important position in local credit markets? They were hardly the only Crown servants with access to Crown revenues, although many postmasters had more than one position and thus access to different kinds of revenue. The postmasters could use this credit to better effect as they held another important advantage: most of them lived and worked in a large house in the centre of their town or city, the personification of their community’s news node. The post-house was also the place where all travellers arrived, which itself promised a much sought-after source of income.177 The upshot was that the postmaster was the first to hear news from other places. We can therefore assume that postmasters were (on paper) perfect business partners, not least because they enjoyed the Crown’s protection and controlled regular, reliable, and cheap contacts with other merchants and the government. This information advantage should have easily translated into financial gain, because they would have had by far the lowest transaction costs with regard to regional and international business relations.178 When post inspector Lange discussed the working conditions of a postmaster on the island of Rügen, he valued the reputation of the postmaster higher than the possible wages: ‘He will

176 There are frequent complaints about these investments (houses, furniture, horses, and so on). Asker 2007 p. 230, stresses the importance of these investments prior to the first payments; see also Frohnert 1993, p. 87; Frohnert 1993, pp. 74–76, discusses the problem of sureties.

177 Undated memorandum by Lange, Kanslikollegium, G II f, vol. 2, RA. When a new postmaster was appointed in Uckermünde, post commissar Lange discussed the fact that there would be no salary attached to the job. Instead, the postmaster would be allowed to keep the post office’s revenues, while the diligence coach would stop at his house, which would be used by the travellers; it should be noted that postmasters were actually obliged to live in town and centres (royal ordinance, Stockholm, 16 February 1707, Kongelige och andra wederbörandes förordningar angående postväsendet 1707, p. 251).

178 In her chapter in the present volume, Kekke Stadin underlines the role of postmasters in the business of international credit.
earn more with his name than the salary, because there is an outward reputation included in the position.”¹⁷⁹ Gerd Grön, post director in Riga, was criticized in 1706 for trading as a merchant on the side, and had a substantial advantage because he received the mail long before all the other merchants.¹⁸⁰ At this point, Grön had been in office for more than a decade,¹⁸¹ and was far from being the only postmaster active as a merchant. Still, given that the complaint was expected to hold water, it must at least have echoed contemporary perceptions.

It was not only the news advantage that was financially interesting: selling news also belonged to a postmaster’s expected income. Statius Stein, Grön’s predecessor in Riga, complained about a privilege granted to Christoph Prescher in 1681 that allowed him to publish a Rigan newspaper and to sell foreign newspapers.¹⁸² Stein claimed that this privilege had always stayed with the post, although he had never made any real effort to publish a newspaper himself. Still, he obviously considered the distribution of newspapers a substantial part of his income. The same was true of the regional directors in Stockholm and elsewhere. The sale of newspapers or distribution of manuscript newsletters often went with the postal business.¹⁸³ In Sweden, there was only one printed newspaper, three copies of which were sent free to every postmaster in Sweden. But there were manuscript newsletters, too, which offered much higher incomes.¹⁸⁴ In 1693, Charles XI ordered the Chancery Board to lower the postal rates between Hamburg and Helsingør because post commissar Peter Barchman ‘without doubt sends newsletters (avisier) to different persons in our realm’.¹⁸⁵ The higher Swedish postal rate would otherwise make him use the Danish post.

A number of assumptions about the postmasters’ financial opportunities as well as their advantages in the news market have been made that necessarily remain vague. Detailed research on the postmasters’ local context, taxes, property, and social relationships in terms of marriage, christenings, and credit relationships could add to the picture. So far, our knowledge of the local credit market in Sweden is thin, and there are only few reliable facts. Research from different parts of the Holy Roman Empire indicates, however, that this local credit market played a major role in economic transactions.¹⁸⁶ Yet even the study by Braken-

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¹⁷⁹ Post inspector Lange probably to the Chancery Board, Stralsund, 17 November 1694, Kanslikollegium, G II f, vol. 2, RA.
¹⁸⁰ Governor-general Adam Lewenhaupt to Schmedeman, Riga, 26 August 1706, ÖPD, Huvudarkivet, E 2 B, vol. 1, RA.
¹⁸² Statius Stein to Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie, Riga, 20 May 1681, De la Gardieska samlingen, E 1567, RA.
¹⁸³ How important this news business was for the smaller offices is hard to tell, but Olof Warenberg, postmaster of Eskilstuna, one of the smaller post offices in the Lake Mälaren area, emphasized in 1723 that his post office had no foreign correspondence in terms that show he had expected it would (Grape 1951, p. 83).
¹⁸⁴ Drost 2009b.
siek, who for years worked on several hundred local officials in Hesse-Kassel, cannot offer more than a few examples. An investigation into the sureties the postmasters put up might offer some evidence; the first impression is that the postmasters generally did not turn to their own kin to stand surety, but to local merchants. Perhaps the more interesting question is why we do not have this kind of information in the first place. Why does a well-preserved archive like the Chancery Board’s not contain any information on the postmasters’ finances, their economic position in a local context, or their perquisites? Why did the Chancery Board avoid this subject, when at the same time it was so interested in the minutiae of even the smallest post office’s accounts of its revenues and sureties?

Conclusions – the nature of Crown service

Many questions remain unanswered because the Chancery Board and the postmasters perceived postmasterships differently. The Chancery Board administered a *jus regale*, the postmasters saw themselves as part of the news business. Not only did it offer them a number of additional options, they could dispose of the office as their private property, give it to their son or daughter, and even sell it to a successor. In Kalmar, Rosenlund did all that – and he was no exception. To top it off, the postmaster could invest the post’s revenues for his own gain. That was probably common, albeit illegal.

Most interesting for our understanding of postmasters as Crown servants is the fact that Rosenlund’s appointment, with its complicated background, was openly discussed by the Chancery Board. However, this was definitely not the version the Chancery Board wrote or arranged for officially. Instead, Rosenlund was addressed in a standard letter written on 24 September 1704, by which the Chancery Board appointed him as postmaster. The widow received an equally impersonal letter, signed on the same day, in which she was ordered to give up her office at the end of her year of grace and transfer it to her ‘successor’. She was supposed to make an inventory of all papers in her possession and hand it over to Rosenlund.\(^\text{187}\)

The decision to transfer Rosenlund’s service to Olof Reppler in 1707 had been proposed by Rosenlund himself, who wanted to retire. The handover was motivated by the Chancery Board in consideration of ‘his old age and hence his frail health’\(^\text{188}\). These were in fact the very same grounds that Rosenlund had given the Chancery Board in 1704 for why he could not administer both offices, but intended to put his daughter-in-law in charge. As early as 1692 he had mentioned his frail health and old age as reasons to transfer his office to his stepson. It is his phrasing the Chancery Board used repeatedly in its delibera-

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\(^\text{187}\) Kanslikollegium, B I a, vol. 7, 24 September 1704, RA, for both letters.

\(^\text{188}\) Kanslikollegium, C II, vol. 11, RA.
tions. The official appointment, however, made no mention of the widow, the post-house, the family’s maintenance, or Rosenlund’s previous service, neither was there any reference to any kind of arrangement concerning the ways in which the office would be performed.189 Instead, the Chancery Board acted as a Crown institution, speaking with its regal, sovereign, and authoritative voice.190 The Chancery Board appointed a new Crown servant, and the position entailed a certain amount of work and wages. Full stop.

The Chancery Board’s actions have to be understood in light of the widow’s interests. There was no possibility of employing her officially, yet at the same time, all parties to the appointment process were well aware that she was capable and could administer the Kalmar post office for years to come because she had known the duties of a postmaster since her childhood. Her father the mayor had been postmaster in Vimmerby between 1676 and 1708.

Britta Lundgren has discussed the particular problems of seventeenth-century female postmasters. She sets out to explain why some eight per cent of all postmasterships in the seventeenth century were operated by widows (often for many years, and with the Chancery Board’s explicit approval) and why these widows disappeared from post offices in early eighteenth century.191 The pension scheme that was set up in Sweden certainly acknowledged the interests of the widows, but as this system was only introduced in the second half of the eighteenth century, Lundgren does not assign any particular importance to it. She then notes the fact that the early postal system’s wages were pretty low, which made these positions less interesting for men, not least because the wages were not paid regularly. The widows’ activities were thus approved against the background of the low-paid work involved. This argument is borne out by the 1691 ban on widows retaining postmasterships, in the beginning clearly aimed at the bigger offices. On the other hand, the main post offices have always had their fair share of widows.

Lundgren also emphasizes that it was increasingly thought problematic that women did not have the necessary authority to administer an official post service, in particular when they had to supervise male servants in the shape of post-farmers. This argument was part of contemporary Lutheran theology, matched by a patriarchal world-view that welcomed women’s subordination to men’s domination. Still, for much of the seventeenth century it was possible for women to work for the Crown on a lower level, succeeding their late husbands. Official politics notwithstanding, it was clearly permissible in Collins’s case to allow her to run the post unofficially.

Patriarchal society accorded women certain roles in society. A woman was expected to organize the household, bear and raise children, and support her

189 Only rarely are acting postmasters mentioned in the archive material.
190 Olsson 1979, pp. 31–32.
191 Lundgren 1987, pp. 23–34.
husband in his duties. Her place was in the home, whereas her husband was expected to act in the public sphere, which gave her a distinct standing.\footnote{192} When it came to a postmaster, however, his office was part of his household. There were hardly any public post offices. On the contrary, his appointment transformed the postmaster’s private house into a public post-house. And in this post-house, the postmaster’s wife had clear responsibilities, meaning she had to share in her husband’s public role; in consequence, she could act in the town’s public sphere. That was particularly obvious in the case of a widow, who after her husband’s death became the principal of the house. She could act on her own behalf as long as she did not remarry, which, however, was what society expected of her; a widow could own and trade property, and she could be a member of a guild.\footnote{193}

Despite this obvious engagement in public office, a widow’s chances of retaining her husband’s Crown office were increasingly limited after 1700. However, even then the married woman formed a ‘working couple’ with her husband, and took part in his public activities.\footnote{194} Her contribution remained important, not least if she had been the one to grow up in a postal household and if it was she who was literate. It was only in the nineteenth century that a wife’s responsibilities were further restricted and patriarchal notions reinforced, for it was only then that a Crown servant’s official and private household were more clearly separated. In consequence, women were almost invisible in the public sphere, much more so than in early modern times. This later development finally reduced the bourgeois women’s space to a private and mostly invisible sphere.\footnote{195}

This was a long-term development. There was another that took much less time: women became invisible in the postal administration’s archive. Wölck’s example shows that there were clearly two different ways of writing and thinking about the appointment of a new postmaster. When the Chancery Board discussed Helena Collin’s support, it was obvious that she knew her way around the post and that she would continue to operate the post office in Kalmar in future, whether she remarried or not. The Chancery Board had good reason to keep her in that position and maintain her family.

This family, however, was not clearly defined. Whereas Helena Collins’ pretensions were accepted without hesitation, the same was not true of other candidates. According to the list of applicants, one, Mathias Morin, was related to Wölck. Informing the Chancery Board about their kinship was supposed to increase his chances – but it was not Morin himself who provided the information, at least not in his application. It was probably inserted into the delibera-

\footnote{192} The wife of Johann Harms, the newly installed postmaster of Bergen on the island of Rügen, was accused of wearing a fontange (tall head-dress) in the city. Harms claimed that she did not wear it in church, and that he considered it appropriate attire in light of his position as a Crown servant (Haas 1893, pp. 93–94).


\footnote{194} This expression was coined by Heide Wunder to describe womens’ role in feudal society.

\footnote{195} Brakensiek 2000.
tions by whoever presented his application to the Chancery Board. Being the relative of a former postmaster was possibly of doubtful merit, especially if the postmaster in question did not mention this connection himself, so ‘making’ Morin a relative. Kinship was by no means evident or natural. A postmaster’s ‘family’ was not the same as a family in today’s sense. The term in Swedish is a French loan-word that only arrived later in the eighteenth century, and until then the Latin word ‘familia’ referred to the household, encompassing all the people under the dominion of the patriarch: wife, children, and servants. It was a term that had both social and economic ramifications, and referred to the household as a financial unit.

The postmaster’s household as a part of the Crown’s economy

Contemporary notions of the Crown’s dominion were strongly influenced by Aristotelian philosophy, which was believed to correspond to Christian ideals. Social relationships were defined as different forms of friendship. That included kinship. The household was the smallest unit in this dominion, in which all parts functioned according to the same patriarchal model. The household of the prince, his court, thus equated to the household of his subjects. The prince’s dominion over his realm was equally patriarchal as the father’s over his household and estate. The prince’s care for his servants equalled the father’s for his wife, children, and servants.

When the Crown supported a postmaster’s household, it thus protected the foundations of its own economy. In the feudal economy, the prince’s household was in many ways intertwined with the Crown servants’ economy. Wages constituted just one aspect of this mutual relationship, which spanned far more than financial considerations. The Crown servant invested far more than just his knowledge and time in his service. He had also acquired a certain education, and arranged an appropriate education for his children so that they could take over his or any other Crown office. Moreover, the Crown servant embodied the Crown’s credit in the local community. He invested in his office’s gear: the horses, the house, and other equipment. He is perhaps best understood as the Crown’s ‘co-enterpriser’.

Positions in the post office were repeatedly described as remuneration for previous service, which in turn was often poorly paid or even unwaged. Many candidates had already started a family, including a number of young children, who they mentioned in their applications, although at the same time they claimed that their previous position had been so poorly paid: the new position would relieve their pitiable state with the help of a wage. On top of that, the new postmaster received a position for life that might well stay in his family – and

197 For the concept of the ‘co-enterpriser’, see Moraw 1988, p. 4.
thus in his private house. Rosenlund mentioned that the post had been run from his house for almost fifty years, which was obviously meant to convince the Chancery Board to keep it that way. Similar ideas can be found in many applications. Palm describes his service at the post office in Stockholm as being ‘in waiting’. In reality, his service was based on a written contract, and although he was ‘waiting’ for tenure, he did get a wage that was almost as large as that of the postmaster in Kalmar. Palm, however, perceived the position in Stockholm as a means to an end – a postmastership. This would not only ensure slightly higher wages, but a totally different kind of service. His private house, which thus far had no official function whatsoever, would be transformed into a public post-house that displayed the Crown’s colours and emblems, and was protected by the Crown.

The Chancery Board cannot be said to have chosen the most qualified candidate for the Kalmar postmastership: the merits of the seventy-five-year-old on whom their choice fell were not overly convincing, while those of his successor, Olof Reppler, were not even mentioned. Instead the Chancery Board obviously felt an obligation towards the old postmaster and his family. This obligation was not only about money. It was about a position in a local community that offered further gains, be they social, financial, or symbolic: whatever they were, they were not the Chancery Board’s immediate responsibility. What is more, they are invisible in the Chancery Board’s archive, and were obviously linked to activities that at least in part must have been considered illegal – according to the bureaucratic rules. The Chancery Board, however, was remarkably indulgent when it came to these extra-official activities. Few postmasters were ever dismissed for embezzlement, and only then after years of correspondence with the Chancery Board, which offered to wait for the postmasters’ explanations and arrears.

The Crown’s credit

More important than the postmasters’ credit, which incidentally rarely failed them, was the issue of the Chancery Board’s credit – and the Crown’s credit. The Chancery Board not only had problems maintaining its own credit, and therefore was forced to rely on the private investments of postmasters; it often relied on private credit to introduce improvements to the post.198 These investments were almost always mustered by the postmasters themselves, who in return asked for a guaranteed monopoly on the income from that particular service for a number of years.

198 These schemes have left an interesting and thus far neglected source material. Johann Biermann offered to introduce a so-called flying post in Pomerania (23 January 1665, Kammararkivet, Postverket, vol. 5, RA). Similar schemes by Vatky-Rosencreutz, Huswedel, and Birnbaum have been mentioned above.
In so doing, the Crown thus avoided financial risk, especially at the beginning of a postmaster’s service, when like other Crown servants he invested his own money to establish himself. Yet even later on, where postmasters chose to go into trade as merchants, despite their being Crown-privileged servants the immediate financial risk remained with them. At the same time, the Crown obviously abstained from substantial incomes. It not only socialized the risks, transferring them to the postmasters, it also socialized the gains. Why?

The most important advantage for the Crown was that its finances became much more predictable this way. Moreover, the patrimonial understanding of early modern rule, so much in evidence in the nepotism of the local administration – the prince’s mercy and his care for widows – also had two financial dimensions. One was the role of private money in public office: the postmaster’s investments in his job, which created a long-lasting, possibly transgenerational bond between Crown and servant. The other was the contemporary idea that the wealth of the prince’s subjects was synonymous with the wealth of the realm. The beauty of the cities, the well-being of the prince’s servants, were marks of his success and thus of the mercy of God. The numerous travel descriptions of early modern Europe exemplify these ideas.

Considering this understanding of public wealth and the Crown’s credit, the Chancery Board’s archive is not representative of the Crown’s finances. Instead, it focuses on certain aspects that were formalized and accountable. Everyone was aware that these were not to be confused with the Crown’s assets, or indeed the Crown servants’ assets. The major problem of early modern rule was not cash flow, but credit, not least in relation to the Crown servants. Credit depended on an idea of justice in Crown affairs. It was furthered by Crown institutions such as the Chancery Board, which were run according to certain legal and administrative procedures and which were legitimized – for all Crown servants to see – by the accuracy with which they followed these procedures. The state of public administration was thought to mark the Crown’s reliability and justice.

This state of affairs, however, should not be confused with social practice, because regardless of the Chancery Board’s internal logic and the wisdom of early modern cameralism, the prince also had other niceties to observe, patrimonial in nature rather than cameralistic, and irreconcilable with the financial logic of the Chancery Board. The state still revolved around the royal court, which in turn was structured with the help of social relationships and the patrimonial care of the king for his servants. The Weberian perspective is therefore misleading. It interprets the obvious advantages of a so-called pre-modern bureaucracy as tokens of failure and corruption.

The Chancery Board, at least in part, did act like a modern bureaucracy. Many historians have tried to describe the Swedish power state as an unusually

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199 Hallenberg 2008.
modern state, unfortunately still encumbered with a number of flaws. The Chancery Board’s archive corresponds to this notion, not least because several generations of archivists have tried to ‘re-establish’ its rightful structure. In its pages the Chancery Board administered postal affairs in Sweden in the form of a state institution; appointed capable and well-merited postmasters; and paid them properly in exchange for the appropriate sureties, regular financial accounts, and payment of the postal revenues. The archive exemplifies the Chancery Board’s pretensions, which were based on the idea of a just bureaucracy – that everyone knew did not work that way in reality.

As we have seen, this picture was far from the truth, if only because the Chancery Board’s financial and bureaucratic clout was not sufficient to implement it. A postmastership was still so much more than a simple office, even though the official letter of appointment treated it as such. Even the postmaster in a provincial town was thought of as one with the Crown, not least because he was representing the Crown there. This explains too why Crown servants were preferred over other candidates for the position of postmaster.

The postmaster vested his own money and education in the service of the Crown; in other words, he was the Crown’s co-enterpriser. His investments had to cover his requirements for a respectable house, clothing, social standing, marriage, public office, and so on. The Crown had reason to bow to these needs, which were satisfied with the help of perquisites and extra-official activities. These additional incomes bound the postmaster ever tighter to the interest of the Crown, even in subsequent generations. In a nutshell, the postmaster was left bargaining with the Crown, submissive, without legal pretensions, and certainly not on an equal footing. Yet all the same, most postmasters were effective in securing their own financial needs and interests.
Livery Coat, Postal Horn, and the National Coat of Arms

The Material’s Agency for the Honour and Protection of Seventeenth-Century Post-Carriers

Marianne Larsson

For centuries, post farmers, their post boys, and postilions carried the postbag on foot, on horse or by horse and carriage, night and day and come rain or shine. The route went along country roads and paths, through forests and pastureland, over brooks and hillocks. Cold, snow, wind, rain, and stifling summer heat were part of the post-carriers’ working-day. How then were seventeenth-century post-carriers equipped to accomplish their task in the best possible way? Did the postal administration contribute with cloths or other marks of identification? How was the valuable postbag protected? And what did the equipment do for the post-carriers? Did it affect the wearer’s security, self-esteem or status?

The word uniform means homogeneous or identical. Despite this simple definition, the term uniform does not have any distinct meaning with regard to a costume. Some think primarily of the military and police uniforms which signal power and strength, whilst others include the modern business world’s identical and colour-matched corporate attire. The source material on the postal service shows that the term uniform was introduced into the postal administration in 1817, with the introduction of a dress coat made of dark-blue cloth with trousers, boots, and other status-producing accessories intended for ‘the royal postal administration’s public officials and employees’.1 It is evident from the documents – circulars, drawings of uniforms, and descriptions that the new uniform was only intended for senior personnel. Can it thus be claimed that the term uniform was new to the postal administration in 1817? In this chapter, it will be shown how people talked about clothing well before that year. The trail leads to the establishment of the Swedish postal service in 1636.2

1 Circular (manuscript) September 4, 1817; Uniform charts, August 22, 1817, September 4, 1817, original in the Post Museum.
2 Inspired by Michel Foucault’s genealogical method, Foucault 2008, p. 101 seqq., the origin and history of the term uniform within the postal administration are studied. The bulk of the material on seventeenth-century clothing has been published in my doctoral dissertation Uniformella förhandlingar [Uniform Negotiations] (Larsson 2008). The study is principally about
However, first an insight into how the origin of the term is discussed in other contexts than the postal ones. Nationalencyklopedin’s article on the entry uniform is written by costume historian Tom Bergroth. He describes the uniform as:

an identical livery stipulated in the regulations for a certain social group. The uniform can represent the governing power or the legal authorities, but it can also be a sign of professional skill and education. The uniform also signals that the wearer has renounced the right to act as an individual and that he or she had subordinated him- or herself to certain rules, but also stresses the unity in the group.3

With regard to the military uniform, Bergroth claims that ‘an identical costume is one of the prerequisites in order to be able to command a group of armies, navies or security forces’. By way of a brief summary of ancient history and the sixteenth century he believes that during the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648) rules for the cut, material, and colours of the uniforms began to be established. In Sweden, Gustav II Adolf introduced different colours for his regiments during the 1620s.4 In an earlier article, Bergroth correspondingly stresses that, without the uniform, it would not have been possible to ‘develop the complex system of states with their armies, navies, and police forces which exist throughout the world today’. He also claims that authoritative power over the masses would never be able to exist, unless the uniform had been invented.5 With the above wordings, Bergroth ascribes a very powerful agency to the uniform. The term agency used here is inspired by the French sociologist Bruno Latour. According to Latour, even phenomena or material objects can be actors within a social or organizational network, to the extent that they ‘modify a state of affairs by making a difference [...] in the course of some other agent’s action’.6 With Latour, even the material can be seen as actors or agents. As actors with agency, the uniform and its marks of identification do something to its wearer. However, Latour adds, ‘they might exist in the domain of “material” “causal” relations, but not in the “reflexive” “symbolic” domain of social relations’.7 The costume historian Anna-Maja Nylén is one of Swedish ethnology’s pioneers with regard to leading general discussions on the social and cultural contexts of clothes. Nylén writes about the uniform that it does not only represent its wearer, it also legitimates its wearer and it confers power, dignity, and obligations: ‘In these situations, the costume has a very strong symbolic value; it authorizes its wearer and

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3 Bergroth 1996, pp. 52-53.
5 Bergroth 1988, p. 42.
has, therefore, in itself a direct function’. Nylén also ascribes an important agency to the uniform. What agency then did the seventeenth-century postal service’s marks of identification have and what did they do to their wearer?

Many researchers point out that identical clothing was introduced for the soldiers in the seventeenth-century standing armies during the Thirty Years’ War, whilst others credit eighteenth-century France with the origin of the uniform. The American researcher Paul Fussell dates the history of the military uniform back to at least the eighteenth century. He refers to that period’s archaeological excavation of ancient sculptures: ‘That is, the new focus on ancient sculpture instructed people in what the male body should look like, or be made by clothing to look like’. Here, even Fussell suggests that the uniform has agency; it does something to the male body. Regarding uniforms for civilian servants, there is broad agreement that they were introduced for the growing number of civilian officials and civil servants in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The hierarchical order that is manifested in the military uniform also forms the basis of the civilian uniform within state institutions.

Uniform historian Erik Bellander writes that ‘the Caroline uniform’ was introduced into the Swedish army in the 1670s and became more common in the 1680s. Clothing had, broadly speaking, the same look for approximately one hundred years. Like Bellander, many researchers use the term uniform with reference to the Swedish army’s clothing in the 1680s. The term is not problematized; it is used about identical clothes, regardless of the language used during the period being depicted. The collection of excerpts in the editorial offices of The Swedish Academy Dictionary shows that the oldest example regarding the word uniform is dated to around 1740: ‘All the officers are dressed in uniform, with gloves and baldric, Cartridge Belt and Pistol in the Belt’. The American sociologist Nathan Joseph, however, claims that what we today regard as uniforms must be viewed as a very modern phenomenon since further back in time it was neither practical nor economically feasible to dress large groups in identical clothes. Moreover, Joseph believes that uniforms do not have to be identical in order for us to regard a group as uniformed, since there are individual uniform parts that have taught us to perceive uniformity.

This chapter is mainly based on the rich collections on postal history, which today can be found in the Swedish Post Museum. Original documents such as

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8 Nylén 1962, p. 88.
9 See, for example, Bellander 1973; Bergroth 1988, 1996; Craik 2005; Hellspong 1987; Mentges 2005; Nylén 1962.
10 Fussell 2002, p. 15.
12 The Swedish Academy Dictionary (SAOB), excerpts, keyword Uniform. Several examples from the 1750s show that the word referred to a uniform for officers, but also for priests. The Lund-based editorial staff of The Swedish Academy Dictionary was visited on 2 February 2006.
journals and royal ordinances as well as a doctoral dissertation submitted in 1689 are preserved in the Museum’s collections. The excerpts recorded by the postmaster Theodor Holm at the beginning of the twentieth century form the basis for several of the written communications cited. At a later point in time, Paul Gerhard Heurgren, as instructed by the Swedish postal administration, compiled a register of postal communications dating from the sixteenth century to 1889. Using the documents as references Heurgren wrote the article *Svenska postiljoners och postbönders beklädnad* [The Clothing of Swedish Postilions and Post Farmers], which principally deals with clothing during the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

Postal Horn and the National Coat of Arms, the Three Crowns

When the postal administration was established on 20 February 1636 in accordance with *Förordning om Post-Bådhen*, the Post Messenger Ordinance, the social order was composed of four estates – the nobility, the clergy, the burghers, and the peasants. According to society’s rules and regulations and the laws of God, the estate to which a person belonged could be reflected in the costume worn. Senior officials within a rapidly developing public administration were tasked with implementing the new postal system. Responsibility for the transportation of items of post was divided among the empire’s farmers. The *Post Messenger Ordinance* shows how the business was to be organized. A sworn ‘Farmer or Postilion’ was to be appointed, with a distance of twenty to thirty kilometers between the post farms or offices. The post farmer would be responsible for the post being passed on from post farm to post farm. Preferably, the farmer could read and write, and to help him he would have two post boys. He was obliged to lay boards and logs across the brooks and marsh, and to have small steps made to go over all the fences. In that way, the post boys would be able to run as the crow flies to the next post farm, instead of along winding country roads. It was not allowed to take more than two hours for every mile. In every town along the country road, a postal agent was to be appointed, with responsibility for receiving and forwarding items of post within a maximum of thirty minutes. The ordinance contains eighteen paragraphs, of which the fifth one is about the equipment of the post boy:

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14 Holm’s excerpts; Nilo 1978. On going through the postal documents in the National Archives of Sweden, Holm recorded over 52,000 shorthand notes. Under the auspices of the Swedish postal administration, these shorthand notes were then fully transcribed. Using the excerpts as a basis, Holm wrote *Sveriges allmänna postväsen* (9 vols.) which covers the years 1620–1718, Holm 1906–1929.
16 Heurgren 1950.
Each and every post boy must have a specific insignium on the chest and a postal horn, as well as a spear or a spike, so that when he begins to approach the other person, he can blow the horn and give him a sign and a warning to be ready for the journey.

The quotation shows that the postal horn and the postal insignia on the chest were the very first symbols of the postal service. Perhaps they were worn with a jacket or coat made of grey coarse cloth, part of the peasant estate’s everyday clothes.18

Fig. 1: The cover of Förordning om Post-Bådhen (Post Messenger Ordinance) of 1636. Original in the Post Museum

A royal letter about clothing is dated May 1636, less than three months after the establishment of the postal administration. The letter informs that ‘for the sake of our [the postal administration’s] honour’ the ‘postilions or post boys’ who lived close to the towns should be better equipped than those who run among the country folk. It was desired that the post-carrier who ran in and through the towns should, from the Crown supplies, be given a dress with three crowns embroidered on the chest, as well as a brass postal horn.19 As early as 1636, articles of clothing, postal insignia, and brass horns at the Crown’s expense were thus being talked of. Those who were entrusted with the responsibility for the items of post would be recognized on the streets; they would stand out from the crowd, both as a Crown servant and honouring the postal administration. Heurgren, however, is of the opinion that it must be viewed as extremely doubtful as to whether the letter’s request was carried out, since, at that time, orders often remained on paper. Moreover, he believes that, even if the post-carriers were, in-

18 Stadin 2005, p. 35.
19 Royal ordinance, Stockholm, May 12, 1636, Holm’s excerpts.
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Deed, granted some form of clothing, they could not be called ‘uniformed’, since it appeared that neither the colour nor the look was decided upon. Irrespective of Heurgren’s doubt, it is evident that the postal horn and the crown – the symbols that even today are fundamental elements in the Swedish Post Office’s brand – appear during the postal service’s very first year in business.

Ten years after the establishment of the postal administration, in the year 1646 a revised royal ordinance informed that post on foot would be replaced by post on horseback. The aim was to increase the speed and efficiency of carrying mail. The new ordinance provides further insights into the conditions for ‘post farmers or postilions’. The post farmer would always have a proper postal insignium on his chest as well as a postal horn to blow into when he neared the next post house. The postbag had to be transported ‘night and day, in both good and bad weather, without a moment’s delay’. The reward for their trouble was exemption from conscription, coaching services, and doing day work. Preferably, the farmer would be able to read and write in order to be able to write down in the ‘postal record’ the time of when the post arrived. Since a mile was not a standardized distance throughout the country and the minutes were often not on the timer, it was not possible to stipulate how long a mile had to take. Hence, in a stern tone, the post-farmers were firmly ordered to hurry along as quickly as possible with the postbag. If the farmer put the postbag down or if the post boy did not ride at top speed; namely at a gallop and in full career or at a full trot; a four-week imprisonment living on bread and water awaited. Some inspection was evidently possible. At least once a year, a general inspection of all the post farmers was to be held. The ordinance, furthermore, informed that, when the post-farmer had been appointed with the approval of the general postmaster or his successor, the county governor, the county sheriff nor anyone else had the power to, according to their own taste, dismiss the post farmer or, in any way, change the appointment.

From the ordinance, it can be concluded that the post-carriers were subjected to the monitoring that was possible with the available timers. This probably meant that there was little everyday control. However, yearly general- or postal

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20 Heurgren 1950, p. 33.
21 As early as the sixteenth century, the postal horn was used as a symbol for the postal service on the Continent run by the German-Roman House of Thurn und Taxis, Andersson 1994.
22 According to the title, the ordinance concerns ‘Post Farmers or Postilions’. Everything points to the words being used as synonymous terms. For example, the word ‘Postilions’ is spaced out in the title (it is not written in Gothic type like the rest of the text), which, according to the style of the time, suggests that it is a foreign loan word.
24 According to a piece of information from 1660, the post farmers, in contravention of the regulations, let ‘their boys and girls’ travel with the post, Forssell 1936, vol. I, p. 284. That the women and children of the households helped with the postal work that the post farmer was duty-bound to carry out was probably part of everyday life.
inspections were carried out in order to check how the post-farmer was going about his work.\textsuperscript{25} Even if the post-farmer’s work was tough, not least because mail-carrying always took priority over farm work, exemptions from other obligatory tasks could probably be seen as a considerable reward for the farmer.\textsuperscript{26}

The documents show that already during the postal administration’s first decade there were plans for the post-carrier to be dressed at the Crown’s expense and wear a special postal insignia on his chest that legitimated his work in the service of the Crown. That the desire was to see post-carriers better equipped in the towns than in the countryside suggests that the Crown was keen on an honourable and well-recognized profession – to honour the postal administration. It is impossible to know whether the postal horn and the Crown’s insignia on the chest raised the social status of the post-carrier, but it is probably not beyond the realms of possibility that the agency of the postal insignia and the postal horn gave the post farmer a certain degree of status above his estate.

Under the Protection of the Caroline Kings

In the initial years after the establishment of the postal administration, the post farmer and postilion were used as synonymous terms. However, during the 1670s a separate group of postilions began to be appointed in order to solve the constant problems with the all-too-slow postal service. The post-farmers were accused of being responsible for the delays, which were deemed to be caused by the farmers wanting to save their horses’ energy. The principal task of the appointed postilions was to supervise the post-farmers and urge them on. According to the postal administration, the farmers’ horses could be ridden harder than what the farmers themselves wanted to do. Hence, it was decided that, in addition to the needs of the post-farmer, the horses were allowed to be used by the postilions for postal deliveries in a courier system between towns in the countryside.\textsuperscript{27} The appointed postilions were not a large profession. In 1673, there were only eighteen postilions in Sweden and Finland. This can be compared with the hundreds of post farmers along the Swedish Empire’s postal routes. In addition to the cash wage, the postilions were to be given a jacket, two pairs of leather trousers, and two pairs of boots.\textsuperscript{28} According to a letter of authority from 1676, some postilions had the opportunity to receive ready money in order to acquire on their own a hat, a jacket, trousers and boots as well as an insignium

\textsuperscript{25} Forssell 1936, vol. I, p. 71. In the Post Museum’s archive there is a postal inspection recorded in 1741 by the post secretary Anders Rydman during a journey from Stockholm to Åbo via Åland, Rydman 1741.

\textsuperscript{26} Along the ever-increasing number of postal routes, the post farmers came to make a contribution to the postal transportation system well into the nineteenth century.

\textsuperscript{27} Forssell 1936, vol. I, p. 286 seqq.

\textsuperscript{28} Forssell 1936, vol. I, p. 286.
and a postal horn. There is no mention of the design, material or colour of the articles of clothing, but the point in time coincides well with the introduction of the so-called Caroline ‘uniform’.

The Caroline autocracy was introduced in 1680 by Charles XI and carried on under Charles XII, who had to take over the throne after his father’s death in 1697. As previously mentioned, the Caroline ‘uniform’ was introduced into the Swedish army in the 1680s. The model was the French army’s so-called justaucorps, a knee-length cloth coat that hugged the body – juste au corps. The figure-hugging coat had a long row of buttons, large pocket flaps, and wide cuffs. Gradually the justaucorps was standardized. During most of the Caroline period, the Swedish army’s military dress was characterized by the colours blue and yellow. Bellander writes that the colour blue was introduced as the standard colour for the coat in 1687. Charles XII has sometimes been called the ‘soldier-king’ since he himself took part in the battles along with his soldiers. When he left Sweden in 1700 to wage war in Europe, he chose to dress ‘as an ordinary soldier’ and allowed himself to be painted in a ‘simple blue field uniform’ instead of in the ostentatious clothing that had been worn by his predecessors on the throne. Costume expert Philip Mansel points out that the new fashion of wearing a uniform at the court, and on other occasions that required a full-dress uniform, was introduced in Sweden under Charles XII – ‘the greatest soldier king of his day’. The most important reason for the king’s choice of clothing is said to be that Sweden as a great power during the Caroline period was based on military foundations and expertise, rather than good finances. The Caroline autocracy was formerly abolished after the death of Charles XII in November 1718. However, when the so-called field uniform, worn by Charles XII the day he was killed, was transferred to the Royal Armoury in 1748, the word uniform was still not in use.

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29 Heurgren 1950, p. 34. In the source material, it is sometimes difficult to obtain a clear picture of whether it concerns post farmers or postilions. Naturally, there are huge economic disparities in supplying hundreds of post farmers with full equipment compared to eighteen postilions.
30 Bellander 1973, p. 609; Rangström 2002, p. 120.
31 Bellander 1973, p. 269.
33 Mansel 1982, p. 111.
34 Svensén 2005, p. 74 seqq.
35 The Royal Armoury 1748.
The postal administration’s marks of identification show traces of the Caroline rule. Documents from the latter part of the seventeenth century contain information on equipment for, above all, post-farmers, postilions, and post boys who transported the post south along the country roads towards the Continent. In a letter from 1689 concerning a proposal for clothing for Swedish postilions who travelled through Denmark, ‘travel coats’ made of blue cloth with yellow lining as well as a hat and a silver insignium are mentioned. Here, for the first time in postal documents, the words cloth and blue are mentioned, only two years after the army had decided on the colour blue. Cloth is a felted, scoured, pressed, plain high-quality woollen fabric with a smooth and shiny surface. New life was breathed into the domestic production of cloth and, on the initiative of Gustav II Adolf, it gathered new momentum with the help of experts from the Continent. Cloth production at cloth mills was gradually started in many places in the country. Large amounts of cloth went to the king’s regiments. Several qualities of cloth in various colours were produced. For instance, in the 1620s a blue cloth dyed with indigo was produced at a cloth mill in Norrköping. In 1637, a cloth mill in the same town received an order from the Crown for blue and

yellow cloth for nine hundred men, officers, and soldiers. A part of the army was uniformed, but when the term uniform was introduced, it referred to a special kind of dress uniform intended for higher ranked militaries as, for example officers.

The use of blue coats within the army, stipulated in 1687, may be a result of the European sumptuary laws’ import restrictions on the expensive indigo dye being eased. Around the middle of the seventeenth century, the European trade in indigo increased. Indigo blue was ten times darker and thirty to forty times more expensive than the blue dye that could be extracted from the European woad. Indigo was originally produced in India, but the tallest and strongest plant grew on the American continent. Despite transatlantic shipments, in the course of time it became cheaper to dye using indigo than woad. The explanation was that the workforce in the New World comprised black slave workers. Not until the second half of the eighteenth century did dyeing with indigo become commonplace.

Probably the post-carriers’ jackets or coats were similar to the Caroline justaucorps. Perhaps they could simply obtain blue and yellow coats from the Crown supplies. Heurgren conceives that when blue and yellow appear in the letter from 1689 it was ’most likely the first attempt at introducing a Swedish postilion’s uniform’. Even if the new profession of postilions now were given identical jackets, the term uniform did not appear in the postal documents.

The post farmers’ work was so heavy and demanding that it often led to great disparities in carrying mail. Both the post-farmers and the correspondents complained about the delays. To compensate the post-farmers from Scania for their hard work, it was notified in a letter from 1690 that some state funds put by for the countryside were to be paid for the benefit of the Scanian post-farmers. The post farmers chose to use the money to ’have special and distinct jackets made, with a brass plate on the front part of the chest, on which a double C can be put with a crown above it, as well as acquire brass postal horns, instead of only goat and buck horns that, in the past, they used to blow’. As compensation for their hardships, the post-farmers, consequently, chose to furnish themselves with equipment that raised their status. Dressed in a coat with the king’s monogram and equipped with a shiny brass horn over the shoulder, one can imagine that the post-farmers seemed to acquire a modicum of splendour from the successful Caroline army. Perhaps the reward and the chosen postal equipment helped the post-farmers to continue their hard work in a more disciplined way, with fewer complaints.

37 Kjellberg 1943, pp. 111, 141; see also Kewenter 2002, pp. 53-54. With reference to A. Oxenstierna, soldiers were, as early as 1634, ’clothed in a certain blue and yellow livery’ (SAOB: keyword Blue, Internet version, accessed on 31 March 2009).
38 Pastoureau 2001, p. 124 seqq.
39 Heurgren 1950, p. 34.
In another letter, dated 1690, the Chancery Board informed that the post boys who travelled along the routes from Stockholm to Öresund or Ystad:

would own travel coats, both on account of their usefulness against the precipitation and the cold, as well as also to honour the postal service, especially as a lot of strangers travel on the route: for the board wants that, from the postal funds, every post-farmer on the aforementioned two routes will every third year be furnished with a riding coat with arms of blue cloth, underlined over the shoulders and on the arms and a yellow postal horn sewn on the back or the chest.42

In the quotation, both the function and the postal administration’s honour are emphasized. To make such a ‘travel coat’ or a riding jacket, an estimate would be required. Whilst Holm, in a slightly ironic tone, considers it plausible that neither the estimate nor the promised clothing was ever realized,43 Heurgren refers to a document from the tailor Jacob Ganelius, dated 7 March 1690. According to Ganelius’ calculations, five cubits of blue cloth and five cubits of yellow baize lining as well as half a cubit of canvas would be needed for a post farmer’s or a postilion’s coat. In addition to the cloth, there were wages and the cost of three dozen brass buttons as well as the cost of thread and sewing the postal horn onto the back.44 The calculation shows that the expensive blue cloth accounted for two-thirds of the cost. Here, a certain degree of confusion with the terms becomes apparent. According to Holm’s quotation above, it is definitely about the post- farmer and post boys, whilst in Heurgrens text it is about postili-ons. It also appears that the tailor’s calculations are unknown to Holm. If these travel coats were actually made, it means that the post-farmers or the postili ons were furnished with another symbol associated with the soldiers’ military dress, namely the brass buttons. Ganelius shows that thirty-six buttons were needed for a coat. Brass buttons were not a part of the peasant estate’s grey rough woollen clothes. The shiny buttons probably convey the important agency and status, whether it is regarding the post farmer, the post boy or the postilion. With a yellow postal horn on the back, there should be no doubt that it concerned the postal administration’s messengers. Probably, the blue cloth, the Crown’s colours, the postal insignia, the postal horn, and the brass buttons helped to elevate the post-carrier slightly above his estate.

Several of the royal letters thus noted the post-carriers in Scania. Since Sweden had, in 1658, with the Treaty of Roskilde, gained Scania from Denmark, a Swedish postal system was to be established in the province in place of the Danish one.45 At the same time, there were major disturbances in the southern

parts of the Swedish Empire, since the Danes were attempting to recapture the lost provinces, i.e. by way of the Scanian War (1675–1679). For the post-carriers who were transported amongst ‘strangers’ along the country roads in the South through Scania and down towards Europe, it was obviously particularly important that they were, as a form of personal identification and to honour the postal administration, furnished with the Crown’s symbols on their chests – a postal insignium with the national coat of arms, the three crowns, or with the king’s monogram.46 Perhaps the provision of the equipment by the Swedish Crown was a way to make the new Swedes benevolently disposed.

A letter from 1697 shows that the postmaster in Nyköping was aware of and upset over the difference between post-carriers in different places. The postmaster complained that the post-carriers in his own district only had ‘torn and untidy clothes’, whilst the post-carriers along the ‘major country paths’ had blue jackets, with an insignium as well as blue headgear with yellow lining.47 The headgear was a warm-lined cap with earflaps that could be turned up or lowered as required.

The same year, 1697 the Swedish governor-general in Riga, Erik Dahlbergh, complained that the postal service between Stockholm and Riga was far too slow. The reasons were formulated in nine points, one of which concerned the problems with post-farmers and postilions. If it was the post farmers who caused the post to be delayed, they often went unpunished, since it was impossible to determine whether the blame lay with one or several of the farmers along the route. If they had, instead, opted for allowing the postilions to ride the farmers’ horses, they would have found that they did not behave better than ‘the farmers’ boys’.

For they sometimes sit in public houses and get inebriated, and then they ride the farmer’s horses to death: they weigh themselves down with large loads and packages from town to town: they are large men, wearing heavy, wet coats, as well as boots, so that the small farm horses do not manage to drag them and the postbag, which also causes tardiness, in addition to other problems people have with them.48

With the task of supervising the post-farmers and increasing the speed of the postal service, the appointed postilions had been given a position as the long arm of the state, and, with that, as the contractually employed post-farmers’ superiors. As Nils Forssell puts it, it was ‘simply the postilion’s task to be unbearable

46 In the postal history of Denmark, clothing is first mentioned in 1685. The person in charge of the Danish postal service would, at the time, have acquired capable horses and good post-riders; these would be furnished with a rapier, a good coat, and something else that belongs to the postal service, the last-mentioned is probably a bag and a postal horn, Morell Nielsen 1997, p. 9.
for the post-farmers’.

However, it would not be long before the unbearable postilions themselves had to be supervised.

**Clothes Reveal the Man**

The postilion (*de Tabellario*) was the subject of a doctoral dissertation that was submitted, in 1689, at Åbo Academy and presided over by Professor Swederus. The doctoral dissertation, entitled *Discursus Academicus de Tabellario* [Academic Discussion of the Postilion], was defended by Joakim B. Caloander, the postmaster’s son, before he succeeded his father as the postmaster of Åbo in either 1690 or 1691. In the seventeenth century, a doctoral dissertation was not usually written by the student, but by the professor; however, it was the student’s task to discuss and defend it. As a third-generation postmaster in the Caloander family, the choice of subject was perhaps natural.

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The last passage of the doctoral dissertation is about the postilion’s clothing. The first line in the passage reads: ‘Before the study is concluded, something should be said about the postilion’s style and outward symbols’ (*Charactere & externo signo*). The text gives references to Swedish postal regulations and to the situation in Germany. The author points out that, if anything, it was the equipment

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50 Caloander 1689.

51 The Caloander family were postmasters in Åbo for three generations (1638–1695), Runge Kristoffersen 2005, pp. 214-215.

52 The doctoral dissertation’s twenty-eight pages are written in Latin, with bits of Swedish, German, and Greek. The Latin in Section XII, Caloander 1689, p. 20 seqq, has been translated into Swedish by Anne-Marie Larsson and interpreted together with myself.
rather than the clothing that characterized a postilion. As far as was known, the
postilions would wear special clothing (*vestitus peculiaris*) or some different
*habitus* which showed that they worked as postilions in the service of the state
(*postæillæ publicæ*). With reference to the writer Ackoldius, the doctoral disser-
tation shows what usually represented a postilion:

For, says Ackoldius, the postilions usually wear (1) a livery which, even if in its
essence and form does not appear to make a postilion, is genuine. (2) A little
postal horn secured in a belt. (3) Carry with them a postbag, and (4) switch horses
at a certain place.

A *livré*, *liberi* or *liveri* was a costume that symbolized a servient position. For
instance, the term was used for the clothing of a royal person’s male staff or for a
better ‘field uniform’ for a soldier who was part of the allotment system. The
description allows us to understand that it was not about a special coat for the
postilion. Even if the coat ‘in its essence and form’ (*ad effentiam & formam*) did
not characterize a postilion, it served the right function; it was genuine (*ad bene
esse*). With the coat, the postilion carried a little postal horn secured in a belt,
and a postbag. A characteristic was also that the postilion switched horses at a
certain place. The outward symbols and the possibility of sounding the postal
horn protected the postilion during the journey from injury and violence. Even
if these symbols were principally signals for those around him, it used to be said
that ‘clothes reveal the man’ (*Talis quis est, qvalem eum indicant vestes*). With
this quotation written in italics, the author is suggesting that the equipment was
not only of a functional and an identifying character, but that the object’s agency
also helped to shape the wearer’s identity and masculinity.

Furthermore, the author refers to the Swedish Empire’s regulations that show
that the post boys would have an insignium (*scutulum*) on their chests and a
postal horn (*buccina*). In connection with a quotation from the 1636 Postal Ordin-
nance, straight after the words ‘a special insignium on the chest’, a postal
insignium is depicted, with a centrally placed postal horn underneath three
crowns. This insignium – the oldest-known picture of a Swedish postal insignia – is often depicted in the literature of the postal history and is dated back to
1689, after the publication year of the doctoral dissertation. The relationship

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53 Caloander 1689, pp. 20-21. Cf. Ackold 1685. The work that is probably referred to was printed in 1685 and written by Emeran Ackold, a pseudonym for Andreas Ockel.
54 SAOB: keyword Livré, Internet edition [accessed on 30 March 2009].
55 ‘Post’ means a place, a station or an establishment along a communications route, where there were facilities for facilitating mail transit, such as a stage, i.e. a place where, for example, the postilion switched horses (see further SAOB: keyword Post, Internet edition [accessed on 13 November 2007]).
56 Caloander 1689, p. 21.
57 Cf. the often-quoted ‘clothes maketh the man’ (*Vestis virum reddit*).
58 Caloander 1689, p. 22; see also Förordning om Post-Bådhen 1636.
between text and picture, however, shows that the insignium can, if anything – or, at least, just as well – be dated back to 1636, with reference to the publication year of the cited postal ordinance. In 1928, as an addition to the Post Museum’s costume collection, a coat of arms, made of sheet metal, was produced based on this wood engraving. If one looks at the line work in the wood engraving, it could just as well be an original for an embroidery, particularly given that, in 1636, the desire was expressed that certain post-carriers were to be given a costume with three crowns embroidered on the chest. The cover of the doctoral dissertation is illustrated with a wood engraving of a post-rider. The wood carving very much resembles the vignette on the title page of the journal *Swenska Post-Ryttaren* [The Swedish Post-Rider] from 1683. These pictures probably are among the oldest ones that show how a Swedish postilion may have been equipped at that time. However, Heurgren assumes that the original for the vignette may have German origins.

Fig. 4: The oldest known picture of a Swedish Post Office insignium. Wood engraving printed in *Discursus Academicus de Tabellario*, 1689. Original in the Post Museum

Fig. 5: Copy made of sheet metal, based on the postal insignium printed in 1689. Property of the Post Museum (item No 5481). Photo by John-Björn Huber, Svensk museitjänst.

In *de Tabellario*, the author emphasizes that it was not generally known that the postilion wore an insignia with three golden crowns (*tres Coronas aureas*), which was the Swedish Empire’s insignium (*insigne Regni Sveciae*). Yet again, he points out that the Crown’s insignia protected the postilion and made him inviolable.

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59 Insignium/Postilion’s badge, copy produced in 1928; cf. Larsson 2006.
60 *Swenska Post-Ryttaren*, nr 1 [No. 1] 1683; cf. Heurgren 1950, p. 34.
61 Heurgren 1950, p. 36.
since it was a punishable offence to contravene the postal ordinance. The postal horn was principally for signalling that the postilion was on his way and that people should make way, but it also helped to prevent the postilion from being insulted or harassed.\textsuperscript{62} There are documents preserved, from at least the end of the seventeenth century, that show that the post-farmers were given so-called written proclamations of protection, a kind of letter of protection, that meant legal protection against being attacked and acts of violence.\textsuperscript{63} During post secrectary Anders Rydman’s inspection along the route Stockholm–Åland–Åbo, he checked, according to a preserved record from 1741, that every post farmer had a postal horn, a proclamation of protection, and an order letter.\textsuperscript{64}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{proclamation.jpg}
\caption{Proclamation of protection, dated 23 June 1704. Original in the Post Museum}
\end{figure}

In the doctoral dissertation, the author refers to Swedish ordinances as well as German literature. On the other hand, he does not seem to have had access to the written communications in question from that period, those which are now found among Holm’s excerpts. Together with the written communications, the author’s academic reflections help to develop the picture of the seventeenth-century postilion’s clothing in a fascinating way. It is also interesting that Joakim B. Caloander prepared himself for taking over from his father the office of the postmaster by way of an academic education. At that time, holding a post as an official of the king meant that you harboured ambitions of a position in society. When the number of noblemen was no longer large enough to meet the needs of the professional officials, an education, rather than lineage, was crucial for which people were recruited. Åbo Academy was established in 1640 for the nobility in

\textsuperscript{62} Caloander 1689, pp. 22-23.
\textsuperscript{63} Starting in the 1770s, on the roads where money was often transported, the postilions were given the specific task of guarding the items of post against robbery and attack. And with that, the postilions started to bear arms, Forssell 1936, vol. I, p. 292 seqq.; Kämpe 1989, p. 109.
\textsuperscript{64} Rydman 1741.
the eastern parts of the Swedish Empire. Later on in the seventeenth century, burghers and peasants were also given access to universities. The twenty-eight-page-long de Tabellario contributes with important knowledge that the seventeenth-century postilion’s clothing represented function, but it also helped to raise the wearer’s status.

During the eighteenth century, more and more post-carriers were given jackets and headgear. Thanks to Charles XII’s plans to reorganize the whole of the postal service, there is a detailed description of how the clothing of the early eighteenth-century postilion was to be designed. On 10 February 1718, the Crown issued an ordinance ‘regarding the amalgamation of the postal service and the innkeepers’. The second of the ordinance’s seventeen points informed that every third year the Crown would:

clothe a number of postilions concerned in new livery jackets. Their jackets will be yellow on the outside and lined with blue baize, trimmed with twine of blue and yellow yarn, and with brass buttons. Their headgear will be yellow and lined with blue baize, with the corner yellow below and blue above. The boots will be made of stout grained-leather, without a collar, and with spurs and knee-straps.

With the Caroline period’s justaucorps in mind, it can be noted that the colours were now to be changed around. The postilion’s jackets and headgear were to be yellow with blue lining, instead of the other way round. Perhaps it can be viewed as a question of savings, given the empire’s weak economy. Yellow could be produced using plant dyes from ordinary, indigenous trees and plants, whilst the blue indigo had to be imported. It could perhaps have also been a way of distinguishing the postilions from the Caroline army’s soldiers.

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According to the ordinance, the countryside’s postilions would wear an embroidered postal badge sewn on the left breast of the jacket. This embroidered postal badge was to have three crowns in the upper blue part as well as ‘the province’s coat of arms in its proper colours’ in the lower part. Moreover, every postilion was to carry a postal horn ‘over the left shoulder, hanging to the right, in a blue and yellow twine’. Of the six different delivery speeds that were introduced in the ordinance, the so-called Horseman-Post was the quickest. The Horseman Post’s would have a special badge, a round brass plate adorned with a royal crown with a motif of a post-rider, as well as the name of the diocese underneath: ‘This badge is fastened through three button holes on the breast, with an accordingly suitable brass chain and hook’. The Horseman Post’s insignium would accompany the post-rider from the one diocese to the other, ‘whereupon it is changed and sent back with the mail coach or another connection’. The postal insignia was, in this instance, linked to the actual task, rather than the individual postilion.

Insignia made of thin sheet metal similar to this one are preserved in the Post Museum’s collections. Even if they are dated back to the middle or the second half of the eighteenth century, they perhaps constitute the basis for the replica of the 1636 postal insignia made of sheet metal, though embroidered postal badges appear to have been just as common. A contract from 1718 shows that 555 embroidered postal insignia had been ordered, even if many of them were never

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67 Whilst the postal badge for the postilions in the cities would comprise three parts: in addition to the three crowns and the provincial coat of arms, also a city arms, Kongl. Maj:ts nådige Förordning 1718.
68 Kongl. Maj:ts nådige Förordning 1718.
delivered.\textsuperscript{69} This means that the postal insignium did not have to be sewn directly onto the jacket. Probably, it was embroidered onto a piece of cloth which, in turn, was attached to the jacket. Despite this vast order, which was probably for both the postilions and the post-farmers, Heurgren regards it as probable that the metal insignia were predominant in the eighteenth century. This cannot be proven by the preserved insignia. The textile material is perhaps only more perishable, and possibly less masculine in the author’s world of ideas.

Charles XII’s death in November 1718 led to the proposed reorganization of the postal service never being carried out. Everything remained as it was. Nevertheless, some preparatory work had managed to be done. Out of an order of two hundred ‘postal uniforms’, dated 1710, around a hundred were to have been distributed in 1722 to the post farmers along the highways.\textsuperscript{70} The yellow jackets mentioned in the ordinance can be compared with the situation, at the time, within the German postal service. According to pictures from 1719, the German postilions were dressed in yellow jackets with blue lining, white galloons, and white buttons.\textsuperscript{71} Around the middle of the eighteenth century, the Swedish postal service reverted to the blue jackets with yellow collar and yellow cuffs.

\textsuperscript{69} Heurgren 1954, p. 94.
\textsuperscript{70} Heurgren 1950, pp. 40–41, Memorial 20/10/1710; Kunglig skrivelse 8/9/1722.
\textsuperscript{71} Hackspiel-Mikosch 2006, p. 69-70.
Seventeenth-Century Post-Carriers’ Clothing – if the Decisions Were Implemented

Ordinances and letters show that, already during the earliest period of the postal service, post farmers, postilions, and other post-carriers had – if the decisions were carried out – been given special badges and/or clothing at the Crown’s expense. The postal horn and the national coat of arms, the three crowns, were recorded in the 1636 Post Messenger Ordinance, the postbag was discussed in de Tabellario in 1689, and the brass buttons were found in material from 1690. Jackets, trousers, caps, and boots were used for protection against the elements. The postal insignium and the postal horn guaranteed the post-carrier’s legitimacy and gave him legal protection against being attacked and acts of violence. Above all, the clothing seems to have been intended for certain post-carriers in certain places at certain times. The documents indicate that the more the post-carriers were exposed to the gaze of people around them, the greater the possibility they were furnished with functional working clothes and legitimating marks of identification. This was especially to honour the postal service. The newly established government department was concerned about its reputation.

In the material, there are male actors at several hierarchical levels: the king, government officials, postmasters, postilions, post-farmers, and post boys. Even if neither individual voices nor interpersonal power relationships appear particularly apparent, it can be surmised that some form of negotiations had taken place between the subordinate and his superior. Since the postal service was dependent on the items of post being transported quickly and safely, there was during the early modern period – like during later eras – some scope for subordinate post-carriers to express a wish for functional, status clothing. As compensation and reward for the post-carriers’ hardships, warm and proper outdoor garments, adorned with the Crown’s postal insignium, could certainly function as disciplining control mechanisms for the purpose of keeping the arduous postal deliveries going. Even if the post farmers were critical of the demanding workload, it can be surmised that, ever since 1636, the post-carriers had had reason to feel proud of their responsible task and their association with the postal service and the Crown. The fashionable Caroline cloth jackets had probably done their part so as to spread a little royal splendour over the Empire’s post-carriers. The Scanian post-farmers demonstrated in 1690 that they chose to raise their status with the help of the king’s monogram and a shining brass horn. The post-carriers’ coats, emblems, buttons, horns and bags showed that they were not just any farmer or servant. The postal insignia were material agents that made the post-carriers recognisable and respected as the crown’s messengers. In that way, the material’s agency contributed to the protection as well as the disciplining, honour, and status of the post-carriers.
The clothing – costumes, coats, jackets or liveries – that appears in the seventeenth-century material has solely been intended for the subordinate post-carriers. According to the evidence provided by the editorial staff of The Swedish Academy Dictionary, the term uniform was associated with officers. My interpretation is that, at the time of its introduction, the term uniform referred to a special sort of clothing – elegant and with status-producing signs of distinction – intended for high-ranking officers and high-level government officials, whilst the soldiers’ clothing was called equipment, or clothing, for quite a long time to come. In the postal documents, the word uniform is not used prior to 1817, when the dark-blue uniform with embellished signs of distinction was adopted for government officials and public servants from the nobility and the middle classes. Gradually, parts of the public servants’ uniform were also included in the clothing of the subordinate post-carriers. To begin with, the capital’s postilions were furnished with yellow galloons, gilded buttons, and gilded insignia on the cap.\(^\text{72}\) Not until 1866 did the clothing of subordinate post-carriers come to be called a uniform.\(^\text{73}\)


\(^{73}\) Cf. with Finland where the word uniform was used for postilion’s clothing after 1809. Finnish postilions were furnished with a ‘military-style uniform’ that was ‘a distinctive type’, Gripenberg 1969, p. 23.
In Mr Holmen’s commission agency there is, like I had jolly well thought, nothing à la mode, except for some gold and silver braid and lace. I have inquired about the strap buttons...¹

In September 1653, the person who complained so much about there not being anything ‘à la mode’ in Stockholm was Johan Ekeblad, one of the noblemen of the court of Queen Christina. The plague had prevented shipping and, with that, the import of new fabrics and accessories. Ekeblad complains about ‘the smallest of goods package not having arrived here’.² The lack of fashion news caused problems for anyone who was anxious to dress in the latest fashion.

News and Communication Patterns

In seventeenth-century Sweden, there was a growing demand for information about what was going on in Europe within culture, science, and in the commercial field. Fashion, as I am going to demonstrate, also belonged to this group. However, was information about clothes, art, music, and science really seen as news in early modern Europe? Were such things regarded as news in a world without any real mass media?

How do we know if something has been regarded as news? The current price of fish is probably news for fishermen and fish buyers in a coastal area, but perhaps not for young people gathered at the activity centre Fryshuset in Stockholm. What is regarded as news is linked to time, space, and social context. However, so that information will be regarded as news, more is required than it just being informative. It could be said that news is information:

- about something new or something previously unknown;
- which is of interest to a large group;
- which is not intended to last for any long period;

² Ekeblad 2004.
which is up to date, ‘the latest’;
which is circulated by way of the quickest available medium;
which contributes to new media being invented in order to increase the speed of the dissemination of news.

In this chapter, fashion is discussed in relation to this definition of news and in light of the seventeenth-century media revolution. How was fashion regarded in early modern Sweden? How was the information about this disseminated and how was the information used? Who were involved in this? What did the establishment of the postal service signify for fashion consumption in Sweden?

The Dutch historian Jan Willem Veluwenkamp has studied the communication patterns within international trade. He has pointed out that international trade presupposes communication with people in far-off places. During the early modern period, there were, he points out, two basic ways of communicating with one’s business contacts. One was to travel to the person with whom you wanted to do business, or possibly send a representative, and the other was to send letters. The latter was considerably cheaper and simpler, provided that there was a reliable way of delivering the letters. Veluwenkamp believes that, when the postal system was established in Europe, a large number of the business contacts became postal. ³ Milja van Tielhof, who has studied the European corn trade, has put forward a similar view. She believes that there is a direct causal link between the establishment of the postal system in the Baltic Sea region and the Dutch corn trade in the same region. ⁴ The postal service radically changed the terms of trade.

The communication channels that Veluwenkamp includes for early modern Europe also applied, as I see it, to the consumers who wanted to have trade and commercial news. Clothing fashion is a good example of such news, since it is strongly linked to trade and manufacture, at the same time as there is a great demand for the latest news. Fashion’s principal characteristic is that it changes quickly. ⁵ What is regarded as up-to-date news depends on the speed of the available media.

To travel yourself in order to find out the year’s fashion was both expensive and time consuming and hardly a viable alternative for many. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, those who travelled back and forth from Stockholm to the Continent had to allow for it taking months. Those who had friends and acquaintances who came home from trips and could recount what was in vogue that season were lucky. The third way of being informed about the year’s fashion was in letter form. Before the postal service was established in the Swedish Empire, it was principally the royal family and the country’s leading aristocracy who

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³ Veluwenkamp 2006, pp. 121, 130 seqq.
⁵ Kavamura 2007, p. 21.
could expect a fairly steady delivery of letters. For others who had to use travellers in order to deliver the letters, it was impossible to know in advance whether the letter took a few weeks to deliver, or several months.

Letter writing greatly evolved in Europe during the early modern period. Letters were no longer something that was principally exchanged between statesmen and/or men of the cloth. Merchants, craftsmen, academics, artists, and many other groups increasingly used the letter for business, scholarly discussions, and exchanging information and thoughts. The centre and the periphery were linked together with the help of the letter. Permanent networks were, Francisco Bethencourt and Florike Egmond underscore, developed for social and cultural exchange throughout Europe by way of correspondence. The expansion of the postal service made it possible to always remain in contact, even from afar. Therefore, the expansion of the postal service must have also resulted in the merchants and the craftsmen who worked in the clothing industry being given totally new opportunities for keeping abreast of the changes in fashion.

The letter was also a new way of privately being together with relatives and friends who were living in other parts of the country or in Europe. Bonds of friendship were formed and strengthened in a new way with letters which were regularly exchanged. However, it also affected the interests and actions of people. Jane Couchman and Ann Crabb, who have studied women’s letter writing during the early modern period, point out that the aim of the letters was nearly always practical and concrete; the letter writer wanted to cause the recipient of the letter to act or react. The content of both women’s and men’s letters was news about politics, family matters, financial issues, accidents, culture, and many other things. Fashion, as I will show, was also one of these often-written pieces of news.

In order that the new communication system would work within the fashion industry, trust was of fundamental importance. It applied to trust in business contacts and other people who were in far-off places, as well as in the actual postal system. Both those who spread information as well as news and news consumers had to be able to rely on a system which they did not control. It was important that letters and other items of mail actually reached their destination, and on time. Therefore, the post had to be regular, relatively quick, and predictable. Swedish merchants and consumers had to also be safe in the knowledge that the goods and services they had ordered were actually delivered. Here, it was about business contacts having the same trust in the written order from a person they had never met, as the order placed face to face. It was a new kind of trust which applied less to the person and more to the organization itself.

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7 Couchman & Crabb 2005, p. 3.
8 Bouza 2007, p. 146.
9 Droste 2006a, pp. 135–148.
Even when it concerned the payment system for supplying news and goods, trust was of central importance. The suppliers had to be assured that they would be paid for their services and goods, and that it would be done within a reasonable period. If we look at fashion from this perspective, the forms of supplying fashion news and fashion items would only change, at the same time as trust in far-away business contacts, the delivery of letters, and the payment system had reached a certain level. This, in turn, presupposed a well-functioning communication system.

Information about Clothes or Fashion News?

My dear sister Margaretha […] if she now wants to know all sorts of current news and fashions, then she can find out from sister Kristina Uggla. She is heading down there… ¹⁰

The year was 1652 and Margaretha Ekeblad, living in the province of Västergötland, wanted to know something about the latest fashion. In a letter to her brother Johan, she had sent word that she wanted to obtain information about the latest fashion news in Stockholm. The brother sent word back that instead of a letter she would receive the latest news conveyed by their cousin Kristina Uggla, who was on her way down to Västergötland. For those who wanted to keep abreast of the latest fashion, it was important to utilize all possible channels. The personal meeting allowed scope for more detailed information. Those who travelled had to always keep themselves abreast of the news and be prepared to convey it to those who were interested. However, not everybody had relatives and friends who came bearing news every season. What other information channels were then available to those who were interested in the latest fashion?

In the seventeenth century, the fashion magazine was still an unknown phenomenon. The first French fashion magazines were published not until the latter part of the eighteenth century, and not until the nineteenth century were the first Swedish fashion magazines published. Prior to then, it was, however, possible to obtain information about clothes and fashion in a number of different ways. One such source of information were the so-called costume books. They began to be more generally popular in Europe during the latter part of the sixteenth century. Cesare Vecellio’s costume book, which was published for the first time in 1590, was one of the more well known. In it, there are around five hundred wood engravings which show costumes from all over the world. ¹¹ At the Nordiska Museet in Stockholm, a similar costume book is preserved. It was published in

¹⁰ Ekeblad 1911, p. 127.
¹¹ Vecellio 1860.
Nuremberg by Hans Weigel and Jost Amman in 1577. These books were large, expensive, and exclusive. They displayed clothes from different countries, for various social groups and different occasions during the second half of the sixteenth century, but hardly the latest fashion news. They showed the costume, but not the fashion, and can hardly be regarded as a news medium.

Mannequins were dolls, usually made of wax, sometimes of wood, porcelain or silk-wrapped metal wire, coiffured and dressed according to the latest fashion. As early as 1391, the first-known mannequin was mentioned, which, at that time, was sent by messenger from France to the queen of England. In Sweden during the seventeenth century, these dolls were usually called ‘tailor’s dummies’ (gerningsdocka), since they were principally designed to show how the new designs were to be sewn. The leading Parisian fashion boutiques on rue Saint-Honoré began in the seventeenth century to arrange a more widespread distribution of mannequins. Usually the dolls were small, 15–20 cm, but during the eighteenth century there were also life-size mannequins or Pandoras. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the organization was so well established that dolls, dressed in the latest designs, were sent every month to ‘all corners of Europe’. The French fashion historian Daniel Roche emphasizes that the dolls were deemed so important that, at the outbreak of war, they were granted diplomatic immunity and could be given a military escort in order to ensure their safe arrival at the courts of Europe.

It is not known when the mannequins began to be sent to Sweden. The oldest preserved mannequin in the country is from the 1590s, and it is found in the Royal Armoury. Probably it belonged to Christina of Holstein-Gottorp, Charles IX’s second consort. There is much to suggest that during the seventeenth century mannequins were also popular outside the court; in Sweden, there were many fashion consumers with inquiring minds. In 1634–35, the Frenchman Charles Ogier noted on numerous occasions that the Swedish aristocracy was dressed in the new French fashion. When Lorenzo Magalotti, from Florence, visited Sweden in 1674, he also noted the Swedes’ fashion interest. He pointed out that, at that time, not only men and women of the nobility had adopted the Paris fashion, but also middle-class women.

The dolls did not come by post to Sweden; they were both too big and too fragile to be carried by postilions on foot. The Swedish fashion boutiques received

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13 For a presentation of the difference between costume and fashion, cf. Stadin 2005, pp. 31-32, and the literature cited there.
16 Roche 1999, p. 475.
17 Tydén-Jordan 1987, p. 5.
18 Ogier 1978, p. 84, cf. also p. 108.
19 Magalotti 1986, p. 11.
the dolls with the deliveries of fabrics and accessories that came to Sweden on-
board merchant vessels. Otherwise, it was probably travelling commission agents
and other travellers who transported the much-sought-after dolls.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, mannequins were a well-known
phenomenon in Sweden.20 Aside from the court, the fashion boutiques in Stock-
holm were subscribers.21 Later these dolls came to be distributed to ever-wider
groups by way of them becoming popular presents among Europe’s nobility and
middle class.22 The advantages of the mannequins were that they displayed all
the garments, inside and out, and how they were sewn. The disadvantages were
that they were fragile and expensive to transport, and, not least, they could not
be sent by post. During the course of the eighteenth century, they, therefore,
came to disappear from the news market.

Card games could actually also be of help to those who wanted to know
something about how people were dressing on the Continent. The playing cards
were sometimes painted with topical fashion pictures. In the remarkable art
cabinet that Gustav II Adolf was presented with on his visit to Augsburg in 1632,
such a card game can be found.23 These cards are decorated with fashionable
clothing from the second half of the 1620s.24 The card games were small and
could easily be carried on the journey or sent in a letter. Moreover, they were
considerably cheaper and more easily accessible than costume books. Playing
cards showed last year’s fashion.

Was this regarded as news? We do not know for sure, but prior to the esta-
blishment of the postal service in Sweden in 1636 information about last year’s
fashion, or even that of the last few years, was definitely topical news. Of interest
in this context is during the 1620s and 1630s Hamburg stood out as a fashion
centre, especially for Swedish men. From here news was obtained and costumes
in the latest fashion were ordered.25 Perhaps this can be linked to the courier
service established between Stockholm and Hamburg in 1620. The service was
principally intended for the letters of the Crown, but here also merchant letters
and other post were permitted.26 There is, therefore, much to suggest that this
courier service helped to make conveying fashion news considerably quicker
than before. When Hamburg was established as Sweden’s media centre on the
Continent, the city, for a period, also became a fashion centre for the Swedes.

The postal service gave the opportunity to send letters, but also newspapers
and other news media. During the latter part of the seventeenth century, maga-

20 Svedberg 1941, pp. 271-272.
21 In Copenhagen, the fashion boutique Louise Rosset had the exclusive right to display the
23 The Augsburg Art Cabinet and its curious contents are today at Uppsala University.
26 Olsson 2008.
zines which could be sent by post began to appear. In France, it was possible to send for some different magazines that contained fashion news and brief comments about the clothing fashion of the time. Particularly in the French satirical press, for example *Le Courier françois* and *La Muse historique*, it was possible to read about fashion. Often it was through the eyes of moralistic fashion critics that the fashion was discussed, so it was important to read the newspaper with the right eyes. However, for the interested fashion consumer there was news to be had.

In the magazine *Le Mercure galant*, which was first published in 1672, there were, on the other hand, regular fashion articles. In the first year of publication, it was reported that it was no longer the court at Versailles, but Paris which was the fashion capital of Europe. In 1687, there was, for example, an article on Charlier’s production of exclusive fabrics and other textiles. Those who were not in Paris, or, for that matter, had not seen the described garments, could find it hard to use these reports, since only in exceptional cases did they contain illustrations. Throughout the seventeenth century, there were altogether twelve fashion plates in *Le Mercure*. There is, however, no doubt that it was about fashion as news.

From the 1670s engraved fashion plates began to reach a wider public. Henri Bonnart was one of the Parisian engraving companies that specialized in fashion plates and engraved pictures of celebrities dressed in the latest fashion. The plates could be ordered from Paris, separately or in a whole series. The collection *Deverse mode noveau & ancien* was published in two volumes of a hundred engraved leaves each, the first with men’s clothes and the second with ladies’ clothes. In Sweden, at least one copy of this large collection is preserved. It was found in Rosersberg Palace, which, for a long time, belonged to the Oxenstierna family. For the empire’s upper aristocracy fashion was important, something that came at a price.

Usually the plates, however, were in considerably small series. Those interested could subscribe to the plates that were sent monthly or quarterly by post. The fashion plates were both cheaper to make and easier to send than the wax dolls. Another advantage, for both the tailors and those interested in fashion, was that the pictures were supplemented with an explanatory text. They were relatively cheap and, moreover, had a format that made it possible to use the postal system. During the eighteenth century, fashion plates came to be the most popular way of spreading information about fashion. It was a new medium that was invented to make supplying news both cheaper and quicker.

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29 Roche 1999, p. 479.
30 Bonnart 1674–1696.
31 Roche 1999, p. 475.
Through the establishment of the postal service, not only the form, by which
the information on fashion was conveyed, was changed, but also the time it took
to obtain the latest information. When the Swedish postal service had been estab-
lished, expanded, and linked to the Continental postal service, Stockholm’s
fashion-conscious population was able to receive news about the latest Paris fa-
shion within two to three weeks. The news, more or less, reached Riga just as
quickly. In Finland and the Swedish countryside, people had to wait an addi-
tional couple of days or a week for the latest news.\textsuperscript{32} Through the postal system,
the Baltic Sea region came, in a totally different way than before, to be incorpo-
rated into the European cultural group. News about fashion, culture, and similar
issues—of interest to, above all, the nobility, the upper-middle class, and the
clergy—reached Sweden from the European metropolises with a speed not seen
before. Inhabitants of the Swedish Empire no longer needed to risk appearing to
be Europe’s ignorant and badly dressed country bumpkins. They could now find
out what was going on and what mattered.

**Fashion Boutiques and Fashion Goods**

However, it was not enough to know what was à la mode, as the term goes; it was
also important to acquire the new fabrics, plumes, buckles, and the rest which
were prescribed according to the latest fashion. The royal family and other court
dignitaries often instructed diplomats and other representatives to purchase and
send home fabrics and other fashion goods. Political matters were often combi-
ined with the position of fashion buyer. Envoys from many European countries
had similar tasks.\textsuperscript{33} As late as the latter half of the eighteenth century, purchasing
fashion goods in Paris and other cities on the Continent for the court could be
included in the duties of the ambassadors and other officials.\textsuperscript{34} For the rest of the
population, relatives and friends travelling in Europe were a way of obtaining
new, sought-after goods. Sometimes they themselves took with them fabrics and
other items in their luggage. However, where larger consignments were con-
cerned, they were sent in boxes onboard merchant vessels.\textsuperscript{35} Smaller packages
could be sent by the Ystad–Stralsund postal boat that entered service in 1683.\textsuperscript{36}
However, within Sweden packages were not sent by normal post.\textsuperscript{37} Not until a
stagecoach service was started between Ystad and Stockholm in 1720, can it be
expected that it was possible to send postal packages the whole way.

In Stockholm and the other large cities of the empire, there were boutiques
that sold fabrics, lace, ribbons, hats, and other accessories. However, fashion

\textsuperscript{32} Simonson 2009b, p. 388-389
\textsuperscript{33} Bäumel 2002; Rangström 2002a, p. 154; Stadin 2005, p. 139; Deak 2007, pp. 116, 120.
\textsuperscript{34} Rangström 2002b, pp. 215, 231.
\textsuperscript{35} Stadin 2006, pp. 122-123.
\textsuperscript{36} Heurgren 1964, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{37} Droste 2009a, p. 76.
boutiques in Sweden were not permitted to sell off-the-peg clothes. They were the privilege of the tailors and were not allowed to be sold in the boutique.\textsuperscript{38} These boutiques, however, had mannequins for sale, which the customers could buy or be inspired by in the boutique, and here there were often the latest fashion plates.

In the early seventeenth century, the merchant Lorenz Kruse was often hired with regard to deliveries of fashion goods to the Swedish court. In the middle of the seventeenth century, Hans Bremer's and Holmén's fashion boutiques in Stockholm were, in particular, talked of, and their services were often hired by the court and other fashion-conscious consumers.\textsuperscript{39} However, there were also other shops that offered the more exclusive goods for sale. So, for example, among her many different companies, the Mistress of the Robes Maria Sofia De la Gardie also owned a fashion boutique. There is little information about it, but it appears principally to have been aimed at the needs of women.\textsuperscript{40} There is also information about a fashion boutique in Uppsala in the 1650s and there were presumably such boutiques also in other large towns.\textsuperscript{41}

The goods in these boutiques were purchased from different places in Europe. In the 1620s and early 1630s, German suppliers, for example Sebastian Lelij in Hamburg, were often hired.\textsuperscript{42} In the middle of the seventeenth century, Paris had established itself as Europe's fashion capital and, at that time, it was goods from French fashion companies that were sought after by the Swedish fashion consumers. In France and, in particular, Paris, gold and silver fabrics, silk in a number of different qualities and quantities, velvet, lace, and a number of different accessories were purchased. One of the more esteemed manufacturers was Monsieur Charlier, whose goods were sought after by all of Europe's elite.\textsuperscript{43} Through the expansion of the postal service in the whole of Europe, news about the Paris fashion was spread to an extent and at a speed not seen before. And the news created a demand for the French goods.

The Postal Service and the Fashion Consumer – An Example

For those who lived in the Swedish countryside, it could be particularly difficult to acquire the desired goods. For them, family members and other relatives who were staying in Stockholm or travelling in Europe were a way of getting help.

\textsuperscript{38} Wottle 2006, pp. 127 seqq.
\textsuperscript{39} Ekeblad 2004, pp. 88, 101; Rangström 2002, pp. 56, 150.
\textsuperscript{40} Björkman 1994, pp. 103 seqq. Maria Sofia De la Gardie was one of the empire's biggest entrepreneurs. Her other companies consisted of the most varied lines of business, such as a papermill, a brassworks, a clothes production, an oil mill, a coal mine, a cloth mill, a logging export company, a herring boat with direct selling in the port of Stockholm, a shipping business, a money-lending business, and many other things.
\textsuperscript{41} Ekeblad 2004, p. 125.
\textsuperscript{42} Rangström 2002, pp. 72-74.
\textsuperscript{43} Steele 1998, pp. 21-22.
with the purchases. In letters, they stated what they wanted with the hope that the representative chose the right one for them. Those who travelled were often instructed to purchase fabrics, jewellery, and sometimes complete made-to-measure costumes for their kinsfolk or client. The correspondence between Johan Ekeblad and his brother Claes illustrates how Swedish noblemen could go about acquiring the latest fashion goods.

Claes Ekeblad, who was living in Västergötland, was planning a wedding for the summer of 1654. As early as September the previous year, Claes started to arrange his bridegroom’s outfit. Through his brother Johan, who worked at the court, he ordered fabrics and other goods. Claes wanted to have a beautiful white fabric for both his jacket and trousers and Johan found both silk satin and a fabric called tabby that could be suitable. In the letter, he enclosed small samples of both fabrics and quoted the price.

Johan regretted that there was, however, hardly anything that ‘is à al mode’. His brother had to be patient until new deliveries had arrived. Even if the information about the latest fashion came to Sweden by post, it could take a while before the required goods reached Sweden. Quarantine regulations in conjunction with the plague and other diseases, ice, heavy winds, and other factors could delay the merchant vessel by several weeks. The regularity of the flow of news, which, in the middle of the seventeenth century, had been created within the postal system, could not be maintained within sailing shipping. So if fashion news from Paris reached Sweden within a couple of weeks, it could take considerably longer before the goods reached the country, particularly in the winter. The more up to date the news, the greater the desire to also be able to obtain this fashion news.

The correspondence continued throughout the autumn and winter and Johan described to Claes the latest fashion with regard to different fabrics, braids, plumes, buttons, laces, ribbons, hat styles, as well as prices of all the goods. It was important that everything was right and in the letters they discussed the minutest detail. Fashion was important to young noblemen and something they liked to talk about.

The correspondence was, however, not only about purchases for the brother’s wedding. Here they discussed family matters, but Johan also wrote a lot about life at the court and sometimes even pure gossip. But fashion and clothes were also a subject that they liked to discuss. Johan wrote about his own clothing problems, but also about other men’s clothes worn at different social functions and their love affair with the latest fashion. The Ekeblad brothers were, like so

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41 Stadin 2006, pp. 122-123.
44 Ekeblad 2004, pp. 20-21, 55, 123, 125, 127.
many young noblemen at that time, anxious to be properly and elegantly dressed according to the latest fashion.

The letter writing was often coordinated with the day when the post came to the town. Sometimes Johan Ekeblad mentioned the urgency to find time on the same day to write a reply by return of post. The post day was an important day that mapped out life a little bit more than previously; a day that everybody kept track of.

In the 1670s, Catharina Wallenstedt, land owner and the wife of a diplomat, arranged her life around the post. On Wednesdays, she spent most of her time reading and writing letters to family, relatives, friends, and business contacts. In many of the letters, she placed orders for fabrics, jewellery, or other fashion goods. She was able to maintain regular contact every week with her husband Edvard Ehrensteen, who worked at the Swedish embassy in London. It was important to discuss the running of their estates, the upbringing of their children, and financial issues, but even patterned English fabrics.

Through the letters Claes was informed about the latest fashion, what were in the capital’s fashion boutiques, and what could be ordered from Paris. He made his choices based on this, but sometimes he left it to Johan to choose. For six months, both brothers devoted many letters to the clothing problems in the run-up to Claes’s wedding. They each wrote approximately two letters a week and in many of them clothes and fashion were discussed. Johan had spent several hours in the fashion boutiques in order to obtain the right fabrics and features for Claes’s outfit according to the latest Parisian fashion.

When Johan had been informed about his brother’s choice in every last detail, he had, in March, procured all that was needed. The Ekeblad brothers had come to an agreement that Claes would send a servant up to Stockholm to collect the large box. Major Drakenberg would foot the bill. Presumably, it was some of the wages due to Claes, which would be used for the outfit. Since, ‘among the people, there is now present an imprudent inquisitiveness to start opening up one’s letters’, the money would not be sent in an ordinary letter. Johan had heard the rumour that letters had been opened on the way between Stockholm and Västergötland, so they did not have total confidence in the reliability of the postal service. The money, therefore, would not be sent by post.

On the way up from Skara, Claes’s servant would call on the postmaster in Köping. The postmaster could say to whom Drakenberg had entrusted the money. Through the expansion of the postal service, postmasters had a key role in delivering not just the post, but also newspapers, newsletters, and all other information. They were the information centres and media experts of their

49 Wallenstedt 1995, passim.
time.\textsuperscript{51} The postmaster reported that the money had been given to one of Köping’s more prominent merchants. It is not clear whether the postmaster received any remuneration for this information service, but he probably received at least something. Johan Ekeblad requested that the Holmén fashion boutique send the bill to this merchant. At the same time, the merchant in Köping received a letter from Claes’s servant requesting payment to Holmén in Stockholm. Both being merchants, they could trust each other.\textsuperscript{52} Here, a form of payment was, thus, used that was based on the trust that existed within the Swedish merchant network.

A week later, the payment was completed and the goods delivered. Johan sent an accompanying letter, in which he apologized for not having managed to acquire some goods. In the same letter, an itemized bill was also enclosed.

The postal service had revolutionized the means by which Swedes followed fashion. From Paris, the news was circulated directly to the fashion boutiques in Stockholm and to the court. From there, the information was passed on to the consumers in the capital and the country via letters and personal contacts. However, the postal service did not function so as to handle direct financial transactions; instead, people put their trust in the established merchant system. The postmaster had, nevertheless, a role as an informant about who handled the payments. As usual, the goods were transported by ship to Sweden, which sometimes meant that the impatient consumers were made to wait for their consignment. In Sweden, the goods were collected by the consumer’s representative on a horse and cart. By utilizing the most reliable and quickest system for news, goods, and payments, the latest fashion could even be spread to the Swedish countryside.

**In Which Way Was Fashion Regarded As News?**

In the introduction, some criteria were mentioned that can be set in order that information shall be regarded as news. During the seventeenth century, was fashion regarded as news, and, if so, how?

*News is information about something new or something previously unknown*

Fashion concerns information about the latest way of dressing; this was new information for the people of the Swedish Empire. In the 1620s and the early 1630s, it was principally from Hamburg and the surrounding towns that people got fashion news, after that Paris came to dominate. However, fabric news also came from England.

\textsuperscript{51} Droste 2006a, pp. 135-136.
\textsuperscript{52} Ekeblad 2004, pp. 114-115.
News is information which is of interest to a large group

In seventeenth-century Sweden, fashion was not only the concern of the royal family or the court. A growing group of Swedes were prepared to spend time and money in order to obtain fashion news. From having only pertained to the leading aristocracy at the start of the seventeenth century, it was, at the end of the century, not only all of the nobility, but also the upper-middle class dressed in the latest fashion. That being so, the group that was not only interested in fashion news, but also had the means to follow the fashion, had grown considerably. Within the nobility, both men’s and women’s preoccupation with fashion was, at that time, more or less the same.

On the other hand, within the middle class, we begin to be able to see a division between the commercial interest and the personal. Those who purchased in bulk fashion goods in Paris and in other places, sold them in Sweden, made the designs, and worked in the fashion industry in other ways were, more often than not, men. However, within the middle class, it was more often women who dressed in the latest fashion.

News is information which is not intended to last for any long period

Fashion news is not meant to last for any long period. On the contrary, fashion is characterized by rapid change, and that is how it was even in the seventeenth century. The fashion that was in vogue five years ago had no major informational value.

News is information which is up to date, ‘the latest’

Information about the latest fashion has to be up to date. However, what is defined as up-to-date news depends on how quick and accessible the media are. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the fashion of the year or even of the last few years was regarded as up to date. At the end of the century, information about the latest fashion came regularly every month.

News is information which is circulated by way of the quickest available medium

Information about fashion reached Sweden and was circulated there in different ways. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, there were fragile dolls and large costume books that supplied information about costume and fashion. The quickest way for Sweden’s fashion consumers to obtain information was, however, still by way of the older form of communication system: journeys. They could either travel themselves to a fashion centre, or they could also obtain information from a commission agent, a personal friend or a relative who had been where the fashion news originated or where the news had reached prior to Sweden. However, journeys to the Continent were expensive and took a long time.

From the 1620s, the messenger service from Hamburg, and then the establishment of the Swedish postal service in 1636, created the preconditions for a parti-
cularly quicker dissemination of information. The fashion news quickly reached Stockholm and Riga to then be further circulated in all parts of the Swedish Empire. During the seventeenth century, private letters came to be a completely new way of maintaining social contacts. The post day was an important day for everybody who wanted to have fashion news. The postal system’s speed and reliability were crucial in order that it would have such great importance to the dissemination of news.

*News is information that contributes to new media being invented in order to increase the speed of the dissemination of news*

The fashion consumers’ desire to quickly obtain information about the fashion in the fashion centres of the time helped to create new media. During the Late Middle Ages, the fashion doll was such a medium. Through the establishment of the postal system, new media were created that could more easily be conveyed via the postal system. Among them were magazines and fashion plates, which were distributed throughout Europe every month. At the end of the seventeenth century, fashion news from Paris could reach the Swedish consumers within a couple of weeks.

Thus, the conclusion is that fashion was indeed regarded as news in seventeenth-century Sweden. The establishment of the postal service greatly contributed to the dissemination of this news, facilitated the ordering of goods, and postmasters acted as informants in conjunction with the payments. The fashion news and the role of the postal service in this must also be linked to the concept of trust acquiring a somewhat new significance. It no longer only comprised people, but also a communication system that neither commercial parties nor consumers had control over. The postal service made the Swedes à la mode.
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The establishment in Europe of a postal service revolutionized seventeenth century communications as well as the media landscape. Throughout most of Europe, news, which rose sharply in volume, now traveled expeditiously. The comparative ease by which word could be sent helped new social and economic relationships flourish, intensifying the process of state-building. The consequences of this transformation for both postal workers and consumers alike permeate the work contained.

The Post’s historical role must be considered in the context of European society at large. Focus should move away from its organization and development as an institution in isolation. That is the perspective shared by contributors to this anthology.