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Abstract

This article examines the emergence of the nineteenth-century Ålandic peasant yacht within the larger political, economic and social context of the central and northern Baltic Sea region. Through an analysis of the region's fluctuating and changing trading environment following the Finnish War of 1808–1809, it is demonstrated that the increasing uncertainty, as well as decreasing profitability, of previously stable trading relations provided the necessary impetus to change the traditional vessel design. Avenues for both foreign and domestic innovations are examined. In addition to exogenous influences, wherein the role of the Ålandic peasant sailors' involvement in the Swedish navy is accentuated, the effects of the increasing smuggling activities of the archipelago's inhabitants and the competitive sailing environment that emerged during trading journeys are considered as factors that possibly affected shipbuilding. The results highlight the complex networks and processes through which innovations are generated, transmitted and adopted.

Keywords

The Åland Islands, Finland, shipbuilding, peasant shipping, navigation, trade, nineteenth century, yacht

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In 2017, a group of wooden shipbuilding enthusiasts living on the autonomous Åland Islands, Finland, decided to follow their dream of rebuilding an Ålandic peasant yacht, a very common ship type in the archipelago during the nineteenth century. It soon became clear that the original idea of using a direct forebear for the reconstruction had to be discarded – no parallels to or previous research about this specific type existed. Thus, the shipbuilders chose a different approach: the ship was built using the very fragmentary and mainly iconographic sources available from the period as an inspiration. The keel of the vessel was laid in 2018, and the ship, named *Alanta*, was launched on July 24, 2021. However, the question remained – what defines a nineteenth-century Ålandic peasant yacht, and what were the processes leading to the emergence of this once ubiquitous ship type in Åland.

The aim of this article is to examine how and why the yacht developed into an independent vessel type among the peasant sailors of the Åland Islands. By analysing what defines the Ålandic yacht, where the elements characterising this type came from, and why and how these were adopted, this article will offer one possible explanation for the development of this type of vessel. There is solid knowledge about the predecessor of the Ålandic yacht, the cabin boat of the eighteenth century,¹ and sufficient information about the apex of the yacht's development, the 'fully-fledged' peasant-built Ålandic yacht of the late nineteenth century.² However, it is unclear how the development progressed between these two points, as there are no concrete sources describing this process and its mechanisms. Furthermore, not a single blueprint has survived of an Ålandic peasant yacht of the pre-Crimean War era. Not that the peasants of that period even used blueprints to build their vessels, but now and then some government actor did find a reason to get a peasant vessel measured and documented.³ Therefore, from a methodological point of view, the current study relies heavily on an examination of the political, economic and social conditions of the Åland Islands during the era, and scouring the broader historical context for probable correlations and possible causalities behind the emergence of the yacht.⁴

This paper focusses on the decades between the Finnish War (1808–1809) and the so-called Ålandic War, which refers to the raids and battles fought on the Åland Islands as part of the Crimean War (1853–1856). For sailing and trading peasants from

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1. Per-Ove Högnäs and Jerker Öljans, *Storbåten: Åländsk bruksbåt dokumenteras, byggs, seglas* (Mariehamn, 1985), 23–9; Sven Andersson, *Åländskt skärgårdsliv* (Åbo, 1945), 269–76.
 2. Allan Gustafsson, *Vinden bar hem: Jakter, galeaser, fisksumpar och kajutbåtar före de gamlas minne och fram mot vår egen tid* (Turku, 1977), 121–7; notable iconographic evidence of this vessel type is available, for example, in the Finnish Maritime Museum, photograph SMK200414:32, which portrays the yacht *Eugenia* of 1879, built in Bolax, Åboland archipelago.
 3. For example, the Finnish customs authority commissioned drawings and measurements of all second-hand vessels offered to them as patrol boats. Per-Ove Högnäs and Jerker Öljans, *Med folk och fisk över Ålands hav* (Mariehamn, 1997), 50–5.
 4. A similar methodical approach is used in Basil Greenhill and Julian Mannering, *Inshore Craft: Traditional Working Vessels of the British Isles* (Barnsley, 2008), 14; and Eric McKee, *Working Boats of Britain: Their Shape and Purpose* (London, 1983), 29.

Åland and the nearby Åboland archipelago,⁵ this period entailed political and economic upheaval causing increasing uncertainty, forcing islanders to find new solutions for coping with a fluctuating trading environment.⁶ The partition of Finland from Sweden as a result of the Finnish War, which was fought between the Kingdom of Sweden and the Russian Empire,⁷ placed a new state border between archipelago's peasants on the Finnish side and their traditional main trading partner, Stockholm in Sweden. The end of the Crimean War about 50 years later marked the time when peasant sailing was almost completely liberated from these mercantilistic bans, which had so strongly influenced their trade, once again drastically changing the framework within which peasant sailors and shipwrights had to operate.

The scarcity of primary sources regarding the appearance of peasant yachts presents the main challenge for this study. Archival materials on the subject consist largely of customs and vessel measurement records. Customs records, generated every time a vessel crossed a state border, are plentiful, but they are mostly of statistical value, having little or no information about the construction of particular vessels. These lists mainly account for the name, type, destination, home port and captain of the vessel.

The development of the Ålandic yacht has not been examined extensively by academic researchers, with only brief and cursory passages and/or paragraphs dealing with yachts in the available literature. Local history enthusiasts have largely unearthed what is known about Ålandic peasant vessels. Although their works contain good descriptions of developments in such vessel types – other than the yacht – the broader analysis is deficient. At the same time, the scholarly literature on Finnish peasant shipping in general is more plentiful and quite comprehensive and provides a framework for this study, which, by focusing on the development of the Ålandic yacht, contributes to our understanding of peasant seafaring on the Åland Islands.

Change in the trading environment

The Finnish War gave rise to gradual but fundamental changes in Ålandic peasant shipping. For the previous two centuries, at least, the trade had remained relatively unaltered;

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5. In this study, the Åland Islands and Åboland archipelago are discussed as one region, as during the nineteenth century the border between the Åland Islands and the archipelago area of the Finnish coast was vague at best. The whole archipelago was culturally quite homogenous and linguistically entirely homogenous, with local inhabitants being monolingually Swedish. Furthermore, the whole archipelago area followed the same shipbuilding traditions, producing vessels similar in types, form, and methods of construction – master shipbuilders from Åboland archipelago often worked on the Åland Islands and vice versa. Högnäs and Öljans, *Storbåten*, 65.
 6. Yrjö Kaukiainen, *Suomen talonpoikaispurjehdus 1800-luvun alkupuoliskolla (1800–1853)* (Helsinki, 1970); Yrjö Kaukiainen, 'Finland's peasant seafarers and Stockholm', *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 19 (1971), 118–32.
 7. Per Sandin, ed., *1809 – Rikssprängning och begynnelse: 200-årsminnet av Finska kriget* (Stockholm, 2008).

islanders shipped their own and/or neighbours' produce, primarily to Stockholm.⁸ In the early nineteenth century, most peasants traded anything that they could produce in excess to their own needs. Usually, this entailed making the trading trips with loads of salted sprats, cattle, firewood, cheese and butter. This trade was important for most of the peasants from the Finnish archipelago areas, as it provided them with cash to pay their taxes and imported grain to bake their daily bread and salt with which to preserve their catch. Ålandic peasants sailed almost exclusively to Stockholm, as it was an excellent trading venue for them; it was situated relatively nearby and was a growing city of around 75,000 citizens by 1800, ensuring that it had a constant appetite for agricultural produce from its hinterlands.⁹

In 1808, the Russian czar Alexander I (1777–1825, reign 1801–1825) invaded Finland, then part of the Kingdom of Sweden, with the goal of forcing Sweden to join the anti-British continental blockade led by Napoleon (1769–1821, reign 1804–1815). Despite some resistance, Finland, including the Åland Islands, was quickly occupied. A peace agreement was signed in Hamina on 17 September 1809, partitioning Finland from Sweden and ceding it to Russia as the semi-autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland.¹⁰

Despite the new reality of a state border between the Åland Islands and Stockholm, trade relations between Finland and Sweden, as stated by the peace agreement's article XVII, were to remain the same as before the war until 13 October 1811. In practice, this meant that no international tariffs were to be enacted between the two countries. This agreement was extended by the tariff agreement of 1812, which again confirmed peasants' right to trade foodstuffs and other agricultural produce between Sweden and the Grand Duchy of Finland. Moreover, the agreement of 1812 was extended several times down to 1817. Thus, despite some initial complications regarding border formalities, peasant shipping between Åland and Stockholm returned relatively quickly to its pre-war footing.¹¹

In 1818, a new trade deal between Sweden and the Grand Duchy of Finland was agreed, and for the first time customs duties were imposed on Finnish peasant vessels trading in Sweden. The duties were small, ranging between 3 and 5 per cent of the goods' worth, but combined with the new Finnish export duties, although smaller than the Swedish duties, a noticeable dent was made in the trading profits of sailing peasants. Combined with the general decline in prices of farming produce in Stockholm, the effect was appreciable; some peasants complained to their governor that commercial sailing now only yielded small profits.¹²

8. Kaukiainen, *Suomen talonpoikaipurjehdus 1800-luvun alkupuoliskolla*, 23–6; David Papp, *Åländsk allmogeseglation med särskild hänsyn till sjöfarten på Stockholm: Sjöfarten i Lemlands socken 1800–1940* (Stockholm, 1977), 83, 100–1.

9. Kaukiainen, 'Finland's peasant seafarers', 118–32.

10. Matti Klinge, 'Finska krigets internationella bakgrund', in Sandin, ed., *1809 – Rikssprängning och begynnelse*, 13–28.

11. Kaukiainen, *Suomen talonpoikaipurjehdus 1800-luvun alkupuoliskolla*, 51; Papp, *Åländsk allmogeseglation med särskild hänsyn till sjöfarten på Stockholm*, 111.

12. Kaukiainen, *Suomen talonpoikaipurjehdus 1800-luvun alkupuoliskolla*, 67–8, 131.

Customs duties for Finnish vessels continued to be gradually increased – in 1828, 1834, 1841 and 1845 – further cutting into the earnings of the islanders. The trade agreement of 1845 finally abolished all preferential customs duties previously enjoyed by Finnish shipping, subjecting Ålandic peasant sailors to the same customs duties as all importers visiting Swedish harbours. As the Swedish customs system was heavily protectionist, aimed at defending Swedish domestic production from foreign competition, all agricultural wares – the main cargo of Ålandic peasant vessels – faced heavy duties.¹³

These politico-economic developments presented trade-sailing islanders with new uncertainties. The age-old commerce with Stockholm became increasingly precarious, and this threatened entire livelihoods. Ceasing trade sailing altogether was not an option owing to the need for imported goods and cash, and many peasants were forced to adapt by gradually changing their sailing habits, additionally generating strong incentives to develop new vessel types better suited to the new reality of Ålandic peasant shipping.

Combining tradition and innovations

When the first Ålandic yachts were mentioned in the primary sources of the turn of the nineteenth century,¹⁴ it was unclear precisely what type of vessel was described by the term ‘yacht’ (in Swedish: *jakt*). The classification conventions of the time appear to be somewhat ambiguous, as a vessel with the same name and owner was often cited interchangeably as a ‘yacht’ or ‘cabin boat’.¹⁵ Gradually, however, the term ‘yacht’ became established as denoting a small cargo vessel, between 10 and 18 m in length, with a single gaff-rigged mast. It is reasonable to assume that this change in peasant vessel typology was afoot during the first half of the nineteenth century.

The cabin boat (in Swedish: *kajutbåten*) was one of the traditional trading vessels built and sailed by peasants on the Åland Islands and the Åboland archipelago until the first decades of the nineteenth century. It was mostly used as a market boat, sailed to carry goods to seasonal markets, most often to Stockholm. Cabin boats were open, square-sterned vessels between 10 and 15 m long, with, as their name suggests, a cabin that was situated in the aft part of the vessel. These vessels were clinker-built out of pine, which was the traditional method of vessel construction in the Finnish archipelago area.¹⁶ The few illustrations that survive portray cabin boats as quite flat-bottomed, open vessels that had a shallow draft, a relatively low freeboard and plenty of open space for cargo. Such vessels would have had plenty of cargo-carrying capacity and good hull stability, resisting heeling quite well even without ballast or cargo. The low freeboard and rather flat floors were possibly chosen to make them easier to row as well,

13. Kaukiainen, *Suomen talonpoikaistorjehdus 1800-luvun alkupuoliskolla*, 126.

14. Högnäs and Öljans, *Storbåten*, 29; Birger Törnroos, *Östländska fiskebåtar förr och nu* (Turku, 1978), 128.

15. Ålands landskapsarkiv (ÅLLa), Flisöberg Sjö-Tullkammare, Dagböcker över inkommande ock utgående fartyg 1813–1814.

16. Högnäs and Öljans, *Storbåten*, 79, 85.

which was perhaps more common for smaller cabin boats,¹⁷ larger ones probably being too heavy for efficient rowing. The forward sections seem to bear a strong similarity to so-called Ålandic 'big boats' (in Swedish: *storbåt*) of the early twentieth century: near the waterline, the bow is sharp, but the sides are somewhat strongly flared outwards with plump topsides. This bow design was a compromise between piercing the waves effortlessly and keeping the bow from burying itself under the waves.¹⁸

The collapsible rig of cabin boats was quite simple: a single mast with a single square sail. The mast was stepped quite close to the longitudinal middle point of the vessel, and was usually supported by three shrouds: one forestay and a sidestay on each side.¹⁹ This resulted in mixed sailing characteristics, as indicated by experiments with modern replicas.²⁰ When reaching or running, the square sail excels, and sailing to windward and even tacking are possible. However, a square-sail rigged vessel cannot point very high, and effective sailing closer to windward requires extra tensioning of the luff. This was done with either a rope or an extra spar, causing more work, especially when tacking. Furthermore, sailing to windward could be dangerous, as the square sail could always be taken aback by a sudden wind shift or helmsman's error, causing damage to the rig or even capsizing the boat.²¹ It is therefore reasonable to suggest that one would rather lower the mast and row the cabin boat, or even wait for winds that were more favourable in order to continue the voyage.

The first single-mast gaff rigs, so-called yacht rigs, probably appeared on Ålandic peasant vessels in the late eighteenth century.²² At first, the rig type remained scarce, and the traditional square sail on a single mast reigned supreme as the foremost vessel rig in the archipelago. However, the yacht rig became exponentially more common from the 1810s onwards, eventually replacing the square sail. By the 1850s, the square-sail rig could only be seen surviving on some of the smaller boats in the archipelago.²³

It seems that the first Ålandic vessels to be classified as yachts were traditional cabin boats fitted with the new rig type without adjustments to the original hull form²⁴ – as many vessels were often described interchangeably both as cabin boats and yachts.²⁵ For example, in the Flisöberg customs house records, a vessel named *Domen*, owned by Matts Mattsson from the village of Kallsö in Föglö parish, was specified as a yacht while sailing towards Stockholm on 15 June 1813. On her return voyage on 26 June,

17. Törnroos, *Östäländska fiskebåtar förr och nu*, 33; Högnäs and Örjans, *Storbåten*, 24. Similar hull design choices were also made on working boats in the British Isles when building vessels intended both for sailing and rowing. Greenhill and Mannering, *Inshore Craft*, 55–6.

18. Törnroos, *Östäländska fiskebåtar förr och nu*, 46–51.

19. Högnäs and Örjans, *Storbåten*, 26–7.

20. Högnäs and Örjans, *Storbåten*, 58–64.

21. Högnäs and Örjans, *Storbåten*, 60–1.

22. Högnäs and Örjans, *Storbåten*, 28–9.

23. Törnroos, *Östäländska fiskebåtar förr och nu*, 128.

24. This process of sail or rig change preceding a hull change leading to new and improved vessel types is similar, for example, to the general development pattern of British working boat types of the era. McKee, *Working Boats of Britain*, 147.

25. Högnäs and Örjans, *Storbåten*, 37.

she was specified as a cabin boat,²⁶ even though it seems highly probable that the vessel was still sporting the same yacht rig as on its outward voyage. Customs officers and peasant-sailors alike did not seem to be sure if a new rig on an old hull warranted a new name for the whole vessel type, and initially this seems to have caused the confusion evident in the customs records.

Importantly, the confusion regarding classification existed solely between cabin boats and yachts, not between other vessel types prevalent during the era. This strongly suggests that the lineage of yachts built in the region can be traced to the cabin boat. The change in the cabin boat's rig marks the starting point from which the yacht began its evolution towards an independent vessel type via gradual changes to its hull form and size. By the 1850s, at the latest, the cabin boat with an improved rig had fully developed into a yacht type of vessel: a small, well-sailing and seaworthy cargo ship commonly built and sailed by the peasants of the archipelago area between Finland and Sweden. The yacht took its place as a cargo-oriented vessel situated between a cabin boat and a galeas, being more freight-shipping oriented than the afore-mentioned, but more economical and handier to use than the latter.

However, while the cabin boat was the forebear of the yacht, this development did not replace the cabin boat as a concept. Not all peasants felt the need to move towards larger and more specialized cargo-carrying vessels and were content with their domestic work-boats, which were easily capable of occasional market trips to nearby towns. Further to this deployment, a smaller fishing vessel type occasionally used as a market boat as well, the *fembolsbåten* (literally 'five-boards-vessel, meaning that it was traditionally built with five boards per side), received a collapsible cabin on its aft section. This resulted in a vessel that strongly resembled a small cabin boat in function and form, and was later known as the *storbåt*.²⁷ The emergence of the yacht from the cabin boat should perhaps be viewed as a family tree of sorts: two different strands emanating from the cabin boat, one of the yacht and a second of the later *storbåt*, the latter in combination with a strand emerging from the *fembolsbåten*.

Foreign influence and traditional trial-and-error

Owing to the scarcity of sources, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly where the innovations leading to the development of the yacht came from, and how they were implemented. However, a few clues can be found by examining the geographical connections of islanders before and during the emergence of the yacht – useful design details were often copied from foreign vessels.²⁸ This was unlikely to have been the only way forward design-wise; development might also have occurred by way of trial-and-error based techniques.²⁹ An enterprising shipwright could just as easily take steps forward in vessel development as an experimentally minded peasant shipowner, each entirely endogenously. Indeed, both groups had practical knowledge of how vessel design worked and

26. Ålla, Flisöberg Sjö-Tullkammare, Dagböcker över inkommande ock utgående fartyg 1813–1814.

27. Högnäs and Öljans, *Storbåten*, 28–9.

28. McKee, *Working Boats of Britain*, 16–8.

29. Greenhill and Mannering, *Inshore Craft*, 28; McKee, *Working Boats of Britain*, 14.

were able to work out possible improvements when a vessel was to be replaced. In the case of the development of the yacht, the process was most probably a combination of foreign influence and trial-and-error.

For a geographical connection that could have been a source of these transferred vessel innovations, one has only to look over the Sea of Åland to Roslagen, situated north of Stockholm, which was another region where peasant trade-sailing was common. Ålandic peasants traditionally had close contacts with Roslagen,³⁰ and it seems reasonable to assume that at least some of the innovations leading to the yacht could have come from there. Furthermore, for peasants hailing from either area, Stockholm was the main trading venue for their products.³¹ As a result, vessels from both Åland and Roslagen spent time moored side-by-side in Stockholm while seeking to sell their goods. Visits to the communal cooking houses that sailors were forced to use because of the potential fire hazard of cooking on board³² further contributed to the mingling of peasant sailors from this part of the Baltic Sea region. Therefore, we can hypothesize that amicable relations could have formed between peasant crews hailing from both sides of the Sea of Åland. In addition to the possibilities of evaluating vessels from Roslagen through personal connections and discussions, ships were actively purchased and brought to Åland from Roslagen before, during and after the turn of the nineteenth century.³³ This infers that sailing technology was also tangibly transferred from Roslagen to Åland.

Indeed, there are striking similarities between the Ålandic vessels and peasant vessels from Roslagen. This is, for example, evident from a blueprint made of a Roslagen peasant vessel by the Swedish navy in the late eighteenth century. It shows a vessel with a hull clearly reminiscent of an Ålandic cabin boat, albeit on a much larger scale: the Roslagen vessel is over 20 m long, while Ålandic cabin boats were usually between 10 and 15 m in overall length.³⁴ While similar conditions usually lead to similar technological solutions,³⁵ the similarities between vessels from Åland and Roslagen seem too great to be a coincidence.

Thus, it seems possible that the yacht rig, one of the defining characteristics of the Ålandic yacht, was adopted on Åland after being inspired by the shipbuilding traditions in Roslagen. The first yacht rigs had emerged on peasant vessels hailing from Roslagen during the 1770s, on so-called 'big boats' (in Swedish: *storbåtar*) that were very similar to Ålandic cabin boats. This rig was replacing the earlier single-mast square sail rig, and was by the end of the century the prevalent rig deployed by these vessels. At the same

30. Törnroos, *Östländska fiskebåtar förr och nu*, 178.

31. Kerstin G:son Berg, *Redare i Roslagen: Segelfartygsrederier och deras verksamhet i gamla Vätö socken* (Stockholm, 1984); Papp, *Åländsk allmogeseglation med särskild hänsyn till sjöfarten på Stockholm*.

32. Papp, *Åländsk allmogeseglation med särskild hänsyn till sjöfarten på Stockholm*, 144–5.

33. A crown lawman lamented that, because of their second-hand status, the vessels were usually rotten and therefore could not withstand hard weather and were unsafe. Georg Kåhre, *Den Åländska Segelsjöfartens Historia* (Helsingfors, 1940), 38.

34. Högnäs and Öljans, *Storbåten*, 24–5.

35. Greenhill and Mannering, *Inshore Craft*, 14–5.

time, the name of this Roslagen vessel type was changed to 'yacht boat' (in Swedish: *jaktbåt*),³⁶ a process that we can compare with the terminological transition from 'cabin boat' to 'yacht' that happened on Åland slightly later. It is highly probable that the process started by the Roslagen peasant shipbuilders in the 1770s inspired the development of the yacht by Ålandic peasants.

Another possible source of inspiration for the adoption of the yacht rig were the well-boats of fishmongers from Stockholm, who regularly visited Åland to buy the catches of the local peasants.³⁷ In addition to their frequent visits to the area, trade deals were usually negotiated on board these vessels, giving local fishing peasants ample possibilities to study them. Indeed, these gaff-rigged well-boats were fast and powerful vessels, as it was paramount to get the living fish to market as soon as possible to minimize spoilage of the cargo.³⁸ Birger Törnroos suggests that the yacht rig arrived in Åland via the well-boats of Stockholmer fishmongers, as they started sporting the rig around the same time as peasant vessels on Åland.³⁹ Although he does note that his remark on this matter is as good as a guess, it can still be considered a valid hypothesis.

The Swedish navy is another factor to consider as an inspiration for developments in archipelago shipbuilding. Until the partition following the Finnish War, almost all of the Ålandic recruits served in the Swedish navy, because the archipelago areas of the Åland Islands and Åboland archipelago were deemed to provide suitable seamen for the king's or queen's ships.⁴⁰ While serving, peasant sailors were introduced to sailing ships that were designed in the latest international fashion. Small, one-masted gaff vessels, often classified as 'yachts', were widely used in the navy for reconnaissance and other auxiliary duties;⁴¹ these can be exemplified by the blueprints for the 41-foot reconnaissance-sloop (in Swedish: *Recognoser Barkassen*) *Jehu*, drawn up in 1767 by the well-known naval architect Fredrik Henrik af Chapman (1721–1808).⁴² On these blueprints, the rig is especially noteworthy, showing a one-mast gaff rig with a short gaff and a long boom with a relatively high aspect ratio, supplemented by a pair of headsails; this is nearly identical to the rigs of the first Ålandic yachts. Furthermore, the Swedish navy provided an additional opportunity for Ålandic seamen to familiarize themselves with vessels from Roslagen. During the Finnish War, the navy bolstered its numbers by purchasing and leasing vessels – including small one-mast gaff rigged vessels – from Roslagen peasants.⁴³

36. Berg, *Redare i Roslagen*, 70.

37. Per-Ove Högnäs, 'Med levande fisk på segelsump till Stockholm', in *Glimtar ur Ålands folk-kultur 3: Ålands hav* (Mariehamn, 1988), 42–64.

38. Högnäs and Örijans, *Med folk och fisk över Ålands hav*, 58–81.

39. Törnroos, *Östländska fiskebåtar förr och nu*, 136–7.

40. Patrik Höij, 'Båtsmännen vid skärgårdsflottan. Tjänstgöringsförhållanden och social förankring i lokalsamhället', in Hans Norman ed., *Skärgårdsflottan: Uppbyggnad, militär användning och förankring i det svenska samhället 1700–1824* (Lund, 2000); Papp, *Åländsk allmogeseglation med särskild hänsyn till sjöfarten på Stockholm*, 71.

41. Ian Dear and Peter Kemp, *The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea* (Oxford, 2006), 37.

42. Sjöhistoriska museet (SM), Sjöhistoriska arkivet, Svennebysamlingen, SR 2136.

43. Stefan Lundblad, 'Anskaffningen av fartyg 1808', in Hans Norman, ed., *Skärgårdsflottan: Uppbyggnad, militär användning och förankring i det svenska samhället 1700–1824* (Lund, 2000), 168–70.

These vessels were used in a multitude of auxiliary roles during the war, such as troop landings, patrols and medical duties.⁴⁴ It is therefore possible that seamen from the Åland Islands serving in the navy were able to sail these vessels and acquaint themselves with their constructional features and sailing characteristics.

The names given to peasant vessels on Åland also infer that the Swedish navy played a causal role in the diffusion of rigs. Names taken from Swedish eighteenth-century warships are quite common for Ålandic peasant vessels: *Amphion*, *Dristigheten* (Bravery), *Enigheten* (Agreement or Consensus), *Fäderneslandet* (Fatherland), *Samhället* (Society), *Tapperheten* (Bravery) and *Trofast* (Faithful) come up regularly, even after Åland had been incorporated under Russian rule.⁴⁵ Although some of the names might represent the oft-seen naming convention of describing a vessel's characteristics, their naval tone is hard to ignore when compared with a list of Swedish naval vessels. *Amphion*, in particular, quite certainly refers to the flagship of King Gustav III (1746–1792, reign 1772–1792) of the same name, built in 1778. If the names were copied from the navy, it is possible that Ålandic seamen serving in the Swedish navy could have adopted vessel design details as well.

In addition, Ålandic peasants had many other opportunities to see and become acquainted with vessels different from their own. In their frequent visits to Stockholm during their commercial voyages, the sailing peasants would have seen many different vessels hailing from various parts of Europe, as Stockholm was a busy trading port during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁴⁶ In addition to simply seeing different vessels, both sailing and berthed, extended stays in port made it possible to become personally acquainted with the crews of other vessels. During these contacts, it can be inferred that seafaring and sailing vessels were quite certainly discussed, as this subject was certainly a common one for sailors from all around the world. This could have been one way of conveying new innovations in vessel design to sailing peasants of Åland. That said, an Ålandic peasant did not even have to leave his homestead to be able to glimpse different vessel designs. The age-old fairway that connected Sweden to the harbours on the Gulf of Finland, first mentioned in the mid-thirteenth century, wound through the Åland archipelago,⁴⁷ and it was frequently used by international traffic. Thus, just by doing household work on the water or close to the shoreline – fishing, taking the cows to the

44. Lundblad, 'Anskaffningen av fartyg 1808', 169; Martin Hårdstedt, 'Lantvärnet vid Stockholmseskadern 1808 – en meningslös katastrof?', in Norman, ed., *Skärgårdsflottan*, 319.

45. Papp, *Åländsk allmogeseglation med särskild hänsyn till sjöfarten på Stockholm*, 7; ÅILA, Degerby tullkammare, Dagböcker för ut- och invisiterade fartyg 1822–1832; Turun kaupunginarkisto (TK), Åbo skeppsmätareboken 1779–1855.

46. Lars Nilsson, *Staden på vattnet: Del 2, 1850–2002* (Stockholm, 2002), 94; Lars Magnusson, *An Economic History of Sweden* (London, 2000), 83–7.

47. Henrik Breide, *Sjövägen till Estland. En medeltida färdbeskrivning från Utlängan till Reval* (Stockholm, 2006); Risto Kari, 'Varhaishistoriallisilta vesiteiltä Hansaliiton väylille', in Erkki Riimala, ed., *Navis Fennica: Suomen merenkulun historia. Osa 1: Puuruuhista syvänmeren purjelaivoihin* (Porvoo, 1993), 39.

pasture with a boat, tending to the crops, etc. – there was always a chance to observe different kinds of vessels weaving through the skerries. For an acute observer, this could have provided useful ideas to further domestic vessel development. It has been previously suggested that the square stern arrived in Åland via a similar process during the seventeenth century, as it was only prevalent in the parishes through which the intra-regional fairway ran; in other parishes the traditional Ålandic double-ended design continued to reign supreme.⁴⁸ Even though this hypothesis cannot be entirely verified, it shows that it is possible that shipbuilding innovations could have been transmitted simply by observing anchorage visits and passing vessels.

Once innovations were adopted, competition between peasant sailors might have acted as a refining factor or catalyst for further progress. When Ålandic sailing peasants headed out on their trading voyages, they often did it as a fleet, so that all of the vessels from a parish left at the same time.⁴⁹ It is evident from customs records that vessels from any one parish often arrived at the customs house in strict succession over one or two days, indicating that peasants preferred to sail in company with their neighbours.⁵⁰ This was most probably due to issues of safety, as in case of danger or mishap one would be more likely to be saved by vessels close by.⁵¹ However, there was quite certainly also competitive sailing between the skippers,⁵² most of whom naturally knew each other. Oral tradition from the end of the nineteenth century confirms this,⁵³ and it can be assumed that such competition was also alive during earlier times. During these *ad hoc* regattas, one would have been able to observe how other vessels sailed compared with one's own.⁵⁴ Whose vessel did well in high winds, and whose fared better in calmer seas? Which boats 'buried their noses' in the waves in an undesirable fashion? How did cargo affect their sailing qualities? When taking those progressive, if incremental, steps from cabin boat towards the yacht, vessel owners could continuously evaluate how their vessel performed against similar ones. It also worked the other way around: if a neighbouring peasant-sailor developed their vessel further, one could see if those changes had paid off or not – and whether they should be adopted. Obviously, as we are talking about cargo vessels, sea-kindliness, safety and cargo capacity were the primary objectives, with speed having only a secondary value in most cases. Nevertheless, this competitive sailing provided the islanders with an informal measure with which to assess their vessels' capabilities, possibly refining and spurring forward progress in peasant vessel development.

48. Törnroos, *Östäländska fiskebåtar förr och nu*, 102–3.

49. Högnäs and Örijans, *Med folk och fisk över Ålands hav*, 74–7; Papp, *Åländsk allmogeselegation med särskild hänsyn till sjöfarten på Stockholm*, 129.

50. ÅLLa, Degerby tullkammare, Dagböcker för ut- och invisiterade fartyg 1822–1832.

51. Högnäs and Örijans, *Med folk och fisk över Ålands hav*, 74–7.

52. For example, fishermen in the Solent also had a habit of racing, as did the pilot vessels. Greenhill and Mannering, *Inshore Craft*, 241; McKee, *Working Boats of Britain*, 33.

53. Papp, *Åländsk allmogeselegation med särskild hänsyn till sjöfarten på Stockholm*, 129.

54. Fishing vessels on the Solent developed into faster and more powerful iterations via a similar dynamic. Greenhill and Mannering, *Inshore Craft*, 241.

Uncertainty, demographics and clandestine trade

Having access to innovations does not automatically mean that they will be taken into use – individuals also need a motive to adopt them.⁵⁵ The same applies to the endogenous progress of vessel design: if the traditional vessel design works well enough, just small tweaks to the original form are enough. Furthermore, peasant shipbuilders were very tradition-bound people. As the traditional vessel form was the result of generations of accumulated sailing experience, it was obviously quite difficult to brush that aside and deviate from accepted and proven norms.⁵⁶ The resulting vessel type, for example the cabin boat, was very well fit for its intended purpose, as its general form had remained relatively unchanged from the early eighteenth century, perhaps even longer.⁵⁷

Breaking free from the ‘inertia of tradition’ and making somewhat risky experiments with a new vessel type always posed a substantial risk. Economically, a new vessel was a big investment of time and/or money, depending on whether it was self-built or ordered from a shipwright.⁵⁸ If the experimental vessel turned out to be a failure, the resources invested were lost. If the resulting vessel performed its tasks poorly, it was all the more difficult to make a living. In addition, a catastrophic failure of a shipbuilding experiment could result in the loss of a family member, or even several – threatening the continuity of the whole homestead. A shoddy vessel put the livelihood and survival of an archipelago peasant at risk, so there were strong incentives to follow tradition when it came to vessel designs.⁵⁹

After the partition of Finland and Sweden in 1809, the Ålandic peasants faced a new and increasing uncertainty that threatened their age-old trading connections with Stockholm. Import and export duties were progressively raised during the first half of the nineteenth century,⁶⁰ and when combined with fluctuations in the Swedish krona and the increasing efficiency of Swedish domestic production, the profitability of the traditional Stockholm trade was severely threatened.⁶¹ As sailing from Åland to Stockholm became less and less profitable, peasants were forced to adapt by increasingly relying on alternative venues for selling their goods or pursuing profit in other ways. This could have instigated a call for developments in vessel design. Ålandic vessels were sailing more and more often to places that were farther away than Stockholm, for example to Tallinn in Estonia and to the Finnish mainland.⁶² It seems that the Finnish mainland became a very popular new trading venue, as peasant tonnage registered in the Åland Islands kept increasing even though the number of commercial voyages to Stockholm either remained the same or decreased. Although sailing to Tallinn also increased, especially

55. McKee, *Working Boats of Britain*, 14.

56. Törnroos, *Östäländska fiskebåtar förr och nu*; Greenhill and Mannering, *Inshore Craft*, 16, 433.

57. Högnäs and Öljans, *Storbåten*, 23–5.

58. Törnroos, *Östäländska fiskebåtar förr och nu*, 10–1.

59. Greenhill and Mannering, *Inshore Craft*, 16; McKee, *Working Boats of Britain*, 14.

60. Kaukiainen, ‘Finland’s peasant seafarers’, 118–32; Papp, *Åländsk allmogeseglation med särskild hänsyn till sjöfarten på Stockholm*, 110–9.

61. Kaukiainen, ‘Finland’s peasant seafarers’, 131.

62. Kaukiainen, *Suomen talonpoikaipurjehdus 1800-luvun alkupuoliskolla*, 100–4, 131–4.

after customs fees were abolished for peasant shipping hailing from the new Grand Duchy in 1812, it did not increase nearly enough to explain the steadily rising peasant tonnage in general.⁶³

Another adaptation stemming from the desire to avoid trade with Stockholm owing to rising customs duties was increased cargo carrying along Sweden's coasts. Even though this had been an occasional practice for some Ålandic peasants during the eighteenth century, the number of Ålandic peasant vessels engaged in trading along the Swedish coasts increased steadily from 1822 to 1845. Vessels on these fairways most often carried planks between sawmills located on the Swedish coast of the Gulf of Bothnia and Stockholm. The trade was usually quite profitable, if one was ready to commit to an extended stay slogging along the Swedish coastline, away from one's crops and fishing at home.⁶⁴

Quitting sailing altogether because of the declining profitability of trade with Stockholm was certainly not an option, as all the reasons that had made commercial sailing necessary for an Ålandic peasant continued to prevail. The acquisition of salt was essential for catch preservation, grain was needed to supplement the frequently modest harvests and an inflow of cash was paramount for making tax payments. In addition, demographic developments on the Åland Islands were steering towards continuing, and increasing, trade sailing. The population of the islands was steadily growing during the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1792, the total population of Åland was 11,260,⁶⁵ whereas in 1856 it had risen to 15,877 people.⁶⁶ Even allowing some room for possible error, this is a significant increase, which would also have affected local peasant shipping. From the perspective of livelihood, not everyone could inherit the family farm or secure a living as a craftsman or a hired hand on a neighbouring farm. As potential crewmen and other shipping-related workmen were in high demand, this was a further factor precipitating changes in peasant shipping and, by proxy, the development of the yacht.

Clandestine methods of lining one's pockets might also have played their part in the development of the yacht – the practice of smuggling may have provided strong incentives for advancing vessel design.⁶⁷ Archipelago peasants had excellent opportunities for smuggling goods from Sweden to Finland and Russia during the first half of the nineteenth century. After the Finnish War ended in 1809, there was basically no customs presence in the archipelago area between Finland and Sweden. Some control was established after 1812, when the first customs houses were constructed on the Åland Islands.⁶⁸ There

63. Kaukiainen, *Suomen talonpoikaispurjehdus 1800-luvun alkupuoliskolla*, 94–9, 142–3.

64. Kaukiainen, *Suomen talonpoikaispurjehdus 1800-luvun alkupuoliskolla*, 90–4; Papp, *Åländsk allmogeseglation med särskild hänsyn till sjöfarten på Stockholm*, 189–97.

65. Fredrik Wilhelm Radloff, *Beskrifning öfver Åland: af Fredric Wilhelm Radloff, med. doct. och provincial-medicus på Åland* (Åbo, 1795), 209.

66. Kansalliskirjasto (KA), Sanomalehtikokoelmat, Sanomia Turusta 23 August 1856.

67. For example, a similar dynamic was at work in the smuggling of opium into China during the first half of the nineteenth century, resulting in the creation of fast vessels that later provided design features to the famous tea-clippers. Basil Lubbock, *The China Clippers* (Glasgow, 1946), 1–23.

68. Sakari Heikkinen, *Suomeen ja maailmalle: Tullilaitoksen historia* (Helsinki, 1994), 173.

must have been qualms about illegal activities, as quite soon after the customs houses began functioning the customs officers were requesting an additional lookout point or a customs sloop for enhanced surveillance of trade vessels.⁶⁹ Indeed, the suspicions were proven true after two additional customs sloops were positioned on the Åland Islands in 1815; the number of captured smugglers increased drastically.⁷⁰ Still, not all transgressors were caught; for example, customs officials from Degerby regularly complained that Ålandic peasant vessels were covertly unloading their import cargoes before reporting their return to the local customs office.⁷¹ The officials generally were at a serious disadvantage when compared with Ålandic peasant-sailors, who had both the labyrinthine archipelago and generations' worth of know-how on their side. At the same time, the archipelago between Sweden and Finland provided perhaps the best environment for smuggling goods into Russia via the Baltic Sea, compared with all of the other Baltic coastlines of the Empire.

With their active trade sailing, archipelago peasants often acquired more advantages than just intimate knowledge of fairways and skerries – they also had the right personal connections. Many sailing peasants had friendly relations with their local customs officials, as they were in regular contact with them. This led to at least some customs officials overlooking peasants' smuggling efforts,⁷² which evidently concerned the Customs Board in Helsinki, and could have dire consequences for the officials as well.⁷³ In 1835, two customs officials from the Degerby customs house were sentenced to hard labour and were substantially fined for helping smugglers hide their illegal cargoes.⁷⁴ Furthermore, trade-sailing peasants also had relevant connections to merchants, making it even easier to move clandestine cargoes. For example, in 1818, the Åbo-based Klingelin trading house arranged the delivery of smuggled goods from Stockholm via a well-boat sailor.⁷⁵

The peasants of the Åland Islands and the Åboland archipelago had traditionally been quite lenient towards certain forms of illegal activities, making it perhaps easier for skip-pers to attempt smuggling. Illegal salvaging was traditionally viewed as a right, not a crime, within island societies in the region.⁷⁶ It seems that a similarly lax view was applied to smugglers as well. Ålandic sailors who had been caught smuggling were still appointed to positions of trust in their societies, indicating that such a crime did not damage their reputations within their communities.⁷⁷ The incentives to smuggle,

69. Papp, *Åländsk allmogeseglation med särskild hänsyn till sjöfarten på Stockholm*, 108.

70. Heikkinen, *Suomeen ja maailmalle*, 173.

71. Kaukiainen, *Suomen talonpoikaispurjehdus 1800-luvun alkupuoliskolla*, 88.

72. A similar dynamic was quite usual around the world, as many customs officials were reluctant to make their own lives more difficult by complicating the smuggling activities of their neighbours. Alan L. Karras, *Smuggling: Contraband and Corruption in World History* (Lanham, 2010), 109–32.

73. Heikkinen, *Suomeen ja maailmalle*, 183–4.

74. Heikkinen, *Suomeen ja maailmalle*, 227–8.

75. Heikkinen, *Suomeen ja maailmalle*, 179.

76. Yrjö Kaukiainen, *Rantarosvojen saaristo. Itäinen Suomenlahti 1700-luvulla* (Helsinki, 2006), 22–51; Karras, *Smuggling*, 109–32.

77. Papp, *Åländsk allmogeseglation med särskild hänsyn till sjöfarten på Stockholm*, 109.

moreover, were quite compelling, as Russian (and therefore Finnish) import duties were extremely high, providing ample profits if the smuggler was successful. The pay-offs remained high until the 1830s and 1840s, when import duties were gradually slackened, making smuggling less profitable and often not worth the risk.⁷⁸ At the same time, customs coverage increased drastically on the Åland and Åboland archipelagos, increasing the risks even more.⁷⁹

Overall, Ålandic peasants were in a good position to engage in smuggling while pursuing trade sailing between Åland, Finland and Sweden. This could have affected vessel development by creating further incentives for developing cabin boats into faster and more seaworthy craft, spurring forward the emergence of the yacht. The lumbering galeas was not a very good vessel for smuggling,⁸⁰ but a fast and nimble yacht could have been quite suitable.

Conclusion

In the early nineteenth century, trading peasants on Åland started to broaden their sailing repertoire and range, which called for a vessel type better suited to longer, more versatile voyages. In this article, we argue that the political and economic upheaval of the era made Stockholm trade increasingly uncertain and decreasingly profitable, which provided the necessary impetus to change traditional vessel designs. Cabin boats, small open vessels with a cabin at the aft and rigged with a single square-rigged mast, which were used to carrying produce to seasonal markets in nearby towns, were re-rigged with a single-mast gaff rig – the yacht rig – marking the first step in the development of the Ålandic yacht. This change in rigging preceded gradual hull development that created the Ålandic yacht as a distinct vessel type during the first half of the nineteenth century. It was a small cargo vessel built in clinker out of pine, between 10 and 18 m in hull length, and equipped with a single gaff-rigged mast and one or two foresails.

The innovations that were gradually incorporated into the yacht design emerged through both geographic connections and domestic developments. Longstanding relations with the Roslagen region north of Stockholm provided one avenue for new boat-building features to be transmitted to the Åland Islands. Notably, the peasant vessels of the period from both Roslagen and Åland have distinct similarities in rig features and hull forms. The Swedish navy provided another venue for Ålandic peasants to become acquainted with vessels foreign to their own building tradition, as most of the recruits from the Åland Islands and Åboland archipelago served in the navy. The strength of this connection is evident in the islanders' use of ship names adopted from Swedish navy vessels. There are also similarities of rig between the Ålandic peasant vessels and the auxiliary sloops of the Swedish navy. In addition, observing foreign ships passing through the Åland Islands on a busy and international fairway could have provided inspiration for local shipwrights.

In addition to exogenous influences, local peasant shipwrights were very capable of advancing vessel design independently, owing to a substantial amount of know-how

78. Heikkinen, *Suomeen ja maailmalle*, 198.

79. Heikkinen, *Suomeen ja maailmalle*, 224–5.

80. Kaukiainen, *Suomen talonpoikaistorjehdus 1800-luvun alkupuoliskolla*, 88.

stemming from the maritime tradition of the archipelago. If a vessel with different characteristics was called for, peasant shipwrights knew well what kind of changes were necessary to existing designs. Ship design was probably further developed and refined by the competitive sailing that emerged during trading journeys. These trips were often made collectively for safety reasons, providing a venue for *ad hoc* regattas between skippers and thus making it possible to evaluate different vessel designs.

Within the shipbuilding practice, tradition has a strong influence, and neither foreign nor domestic innovations are easily adopted without compelling reasons. The vessel types in use were usually the product of generations of sailing experience and fit for their purpose. Experimenting was risky, as one could end up with a bad or unsafe vessel, potentially losing either the resources invested into the vessel and/or the family members crewing it.

Political and economic shifts in the first half of the nineteenth century changed the trading environment of Ålandic peasant sailors, forcing them to adapt by modifying and changing their sailing patterns. Rising customs duties in Sweden compelled increasing diversification. Instead of Stockholm, Ålanders' trading vessels now embarked towards mainland Finland, or Tallinn in Estonia. In addition to these changes in trading destinations, modes of trade also diversified. Peasant vessels engaged in cargo trade on the Swedish coasts, or took part in the packet trade. The population of Åland was also growing quite rapidly, providing further impetus for continuing and expanding commercial sailing, thereby furthering the innovations that led to the emergence of the yacht.

In addition to their impact on trade, high customs duties also made smuggling an attractive pastime, which in turn perhaps affected shipbuilding. Ålandic peasants had excellent prospects for smuggling; with their long maritime traditions and active trade sailing, the islanders knew well the archipelago environment and the customs officials. Traditionally lively trading activities provided connections to merchants that made it easier to move clandestine cargoes. Furthermore, it would seem that the local community in the region was lenient towards smugglers. Illegal trade could have provided further incentives to develop the cabin boat into a faster and more seaworthy yacht.

The development of the Ålandic yacht was related to the larger political-economic context of the early nineteenth century, and a detailed analysis of this process can contribute to research into Ålandic peasant shipping, deepening and diversifying our understanding of the region's maritime culture. From a broader perspective, the development of the Ålandic yacht provides an interesting historical example of the complex networks and processes through which innovations are generated, transmitted and adopted.

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