

Economies of Security
An Ethnography of Merchant Seafarers,
Global Itineraries and Maritime Piracy

PhD thesis 2015
Adrienne Mannov

Economies of Security

An Ethnography of Merchant Seafarers, Global Itineraries and Maritime Piracy

PhD Thesis 2015 © Adrienne Mannov

Submitted: August 24, 2015

Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen,

Academic Supervisor: Birgitte Refslund Sørensen

Seahealth Denmark, Business Supervisor: Connie S. Gehrt

*The title page photograph was taken by the author on board a cargo ship
where field research was conducted.*

ISBN 978-87-7611-948-5

Printed by SL grafik, Frederiksberg C, Denmark (www.slgrafik.dk)

Acknowledgements

Many people have helped through the process of researching, analyzing and writing this dissertation. I could not have done it without them.

I would like to thank especially the crews of MV Atlantic, MV Galle, MV Caprivi and Iver Huitfeldt and the office managers, maritime union representatives, maritime school faculty members, and the members of Maritime NGOs, Seafarers' Wives Clubs and Shipowners' Organizations from around the world who generously shared their knowledge, insights and personal stories with me.

A very warm thank you to Kenneth Buhl Øhlenschläger and Douglas Stevenson, who offered early and invaluable advice.

To the office managers in particular who granted me access to their ships and crews: a heartfelt thank you for your honesty, your insight, for giving me the benefit of the doubt, and for keeping me safe.

To Connie S Gehrt, managing director at Seahealth and business advisor: Thank you for clear guidance and warm support, for your ability to know when you needed to point me in the right direction and when to let me find my own way. Most of all, thank you for giving me this life-changing opportunity. It is my intention and hope that this research can contribute to Seahealth's important and ongoing work.

To my colleagues at Seahealth Denmark: Anna Birkemose, Anne Ries, Annelise Ømand, Bo Sommer Jacobsen, Carsten Gydaahl-Jensen, Lars, Jonas Licht, Nille Rather, Richard Lightbody, Søren Bøge Pedersen, and Vivek Menon. Thank you for helping me feel welcome and part of the team, for your patient explanations, challenging questions and hands on advice.

To my academic advisor, Birgitte Refslund Sørensen: I cannot imagine a more generous advisor. Your enthusiasm and dedication is infectious. You have kept a beautiful balance between letting me develop my own ideas and devoting hours of reading and discussion to ensure their rigor. You provided me with much-needed advice and encouragement when fieldwork was tough and held me accountable for the ideas and analyses that sprang from the field's uneven, jagged and challenging sources. Thank you.

Although I had expert supervision at the university and at Seahealth, I also benefitted immensely from impromptu guidance from the scientific staff at the Department of Anthropology at UCPN. A special thank you to Michael Whyte for his ongoing interest

and advice, to Vera Skvirskaja for sober and kind feedback and to Heiko Henkel for challenging, creative and inspired/inspiring ideas.

Through the generous assistance of the Department of Anthropology at Cornell University and Professor Hirokazu Miyazaki, I was able to spend four months studying and writing as a visiting student, affiliated with the Global Finance Initiative at Cornell. Thank you for making this stay possible. It was an enormous source of inspiration.

Am grateful for generous feedback from my writing group: Anja Simonsen, Astrid Grue, Hannah Swee, Iben Karlsen, Marianne Mosebo, Marie Kolling and Thomas Pedersen. I also owe thanks to Lene Tegllhus, Sandra Lori Petersen and Trine Brinkman for talking through ideas with me and offering encouragement. Thank you to Elizabeth Williams Oerberg for sharp eyes and fresh perspectives. Thank you to Bodil Just for grit, generosity and brilliance in everything you do.

To Johannes, Emil and Ella: These years of research, studying and writing have also been about our own economies of security. Even though I did not always keep a healthy balance, you created a loving home for all of us. Thank you for being such awesome people! I am blessed.

For Sølken

In gratitude for teaching me to fight by inviting me into the ring

Table of Contents

- Acknowledgements 1
- Chapter One: Introducing Connections & Itineraries..... 9
 - A Reading Itinerary: Orders & Scales 12
 - Central Terminology..... 14
 - Defining “The Field”: Global Connections 14
 - Studying Risk & Security 17
 - Studying Economy 19
 - Studying Maritime Piracy 23
 - The Structure of the Dissertation..... 37
- Chapter Two: Methodology 42
 - Doing Global Ethnography: Constructing the Field..... 42
 - Dead Reckoning..... 45
 - Nuts & Bolts of Fieldwork..... 50
 - At Sea & in Seafarer Environments 50
 - On Land among Seafarers & in Maritime Environments 57
 - Home Countries and their Maritime Context 58
 - Economic Inequality & Corruption 66
 - Office Managers 67
 - Positioning & Methodology 69
 - Data & Analytical Method 70
 - 71
 - Ethical Considerations..... 72
 - Auto-Ethnography: Paradise Lost?..... 74
- Chapter Three: Tropes of Maritime Sovereignty 76
 - Case I: Flagging Out for Armed Guards 79
 - Medieval & Contemporary: Territory & Authority..... 85
 - Protecting Trade & Crew: Codes, Conventions & Guidelines 89
 - Case II: A Medieval Captain? 94
 - The Absolute Sovereign..... 96

Case III: The Absolute Sovereign & the Military.....	99
Case IV: Sovereignty, Alliances & Discrepancies	103
Conclusion	112
Chapter Four: Placing Human Security on Board	115
The Ocean as Institutional Structure.....	120
The Shipowner as Institutional Structure.....	126
“Paid to work, paid to eat, paid to sleep” (Goffman 2007, 11).....	127
Emotional Human Security: Social Isolation	129
Crew Solidarity	135
Physical Human Security: Goffman’s “Humane Standards”	139
Conclusion: The Power of Place	143
Chapter Five: The Moral Economy of Seafaring.....	146
Human Security Risks at Home	150
The Gendered Moral Economy of Seafaring	156
Hardik, Dulal & Sachiv: Sons, Husbands & Fathers	157
Independence, Adventure & Care: Martin & Christiana	165
Affective Labor	173
Conclusion: Gendered Moral Economy	183
Chapter Six: Arbitrating Maritime Labor.....	185
Arbitrating Maritime Labor: Homogenizing Labor	188
Arbitrating Labor, Meat & Fuel.....	196
Entanglements	199
Different Kinds of Inequality	205
Slippage: from Labor Value to Human Value	207
Conclusion	214
Chapter Seven: Arbitrating Piracy Risks.....	216
The Value of Risk	217
Quantifying Piracy Risk.....	220
Baseline Scores.....	220
Quantifying Risk On Board: Hardship Allowance	222
Scaled Risk of Life	227

No Compensation. No Risk?	229
Discursive Risk Instruments	233
Arbitraging Risks at Home and Risks at Sea	238
Profiting from Risk Revisited	243
Conclusion: Arbitraging Arbitrage	245
Chapter Eight:	249
Arbitraging Lives :: Existential Arbitrage	249
An Attack: Arbitraging Lives	253
The Going Rate for a Life	256
Existential Security/Insecurity	260
Poisonous Knowledge	265
Captain Minas.....	265
Captain Dieter	271
Moral Economy Revisited: The State & the Employer	276
Existential Arbitrage	280
Conclusion	285
Chapter Nine: Dead Reckoning.....	288
Bibliography.....	295
Appendix A: Diagram of Ship Architecture.....	305
Appendix B: Professional Hierarchy on Board.....	306
Summary.....	307

Chapter One: Introducing Connections & Itineraries

In the summer of 2011, newspaper headlines trumpeted stories about maritime piracy attacks off the coast of Somalia in sensational and terrifying terms. Articles with headlines such as “Somali Pirates Heighten Violence”¹ (October 18, 2011, Berlingske) and “Violence in Somali piracy rises to record levels” (January 19, 2011, The Independent)² described how ships were shot at with automatic weapons and boarded. The crews were threatened at gunpoint and taken hostage. Hostages were often subjected to significant violence and held for ransom, sometimes for years. In some cases, they were subjected to physical and mental torture (OBP 2015). But how did seafarers on board perceive this risk? In order to answer this question, I conducted anthropological research in the Indian Ocean (HRA) and along the West coast of Africa up to the Gulf of Guinea (GoG)³, areas where maritime piracy attacks pose risks to the livelihood and lives of international merchant seafarers. Furthermore, I conducted field research on land among seafarers and industry stakeholders in the Ukraine, India and the Philippines, countries that provide the majority of the maritime industry’s seafaring labor, as well as in Denmark, one of the largest shipping nations in the world⁴.

“International merchant seafarers” is a specific category of laborers that serve the contemporary international shipping industry. They work on the cargo ships that move commodities along itineraries between, for example, Asia and Europe, the United States and West Africa, or Europe and South America on container ships, bulk carriers, tankers and other types of long haul vessels. Anthropological research on seafaring has often focused on fishermen and fishing communities (for some classic examples see (Malinowski 1961; Firth 1946; Fraser 1962), whereas the seafarers who work in the international shipping industry have not received as much attention within anthropological studies.

Cargo ships fly many different flags, are owned by a variety of citizens, and each ship is most often crewed by a vastly diverse group of nationals. Of the crews that I sailed

¹ Source: <http://www.business.dk/transport/somaliske-pirater-optrapper-volden>, retrieved 7/8/2015 (Headline translation by the author).

² Source: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/violence-in-somali-piracy-rises-to-record-levels-2187890.html>

³ Henceforth, I will refer to the Indian Ocean as the “HRA”, which stands for “High Risk Area” and to the Gulf of Guinea as “GoG” since this is how these areas are referred to within the international maritime industry. I will elaborate on why they are referred to in this manner below.

⁴ A thorough description of why I chose these countries and of their relevant maritime contexts will be presented in Chapter Two on methodology.

among during fieldwork, nine nationalities were present. It is standard to find many different nationalities among crews that operate international cargo ships. Seafarers who work on ships that trade internationally work and live on board for approx. 2-10 months or more at a time, sometimes for the better part of their adult lives. They operate an international fleet of merchant ships, which literally moves the global economy. In 2008, merchant seafarers moved 8.2 billion tons of goods in total⁵. Today, 90% of all goods bought and sold globally are transported on board merchant ships. It is estimated that there are a total of 1.3 million seafarers operating these ships from all over the world⁶. Without the seafarers who operate these ships, global trade as we know it, and the world economy with it, would collapse. As it was expressed quite clearly, without shipping “half the world’s population would freeze and the other half would starve”⁷. And as journalist Rose George exclaims upon embarking on field research on board a container ship:

The public is not allowed on a ship like this, nor even on the dock. There are no ordinary citizens to witness the workings of an industry that is one of the most fundamental to their daily existence. These ships and boxes belong to a business that feeds, clothes, warms, and supplies us. They have fueled if not created globalization. (George 2013, 2)

Despite the centrality of shipping in our contemporary lives, George draws our attention to how little we know about the industry and its movements of goods around the globe. In addition, I might add that we – in George’s words, “ordinary citizens” - know even less about *the people* who move these goods, the conditions under which they work and live at sea and what led them to become seafarers. During fieldwork, seafarers shared not only their perceptions of contemporary maritime piracy, but they also provided a dense narrative that expands upon seafaring lives more broadly. Because of the global pervasiveness of the industry, these narratives offer not only a portrayal of what some might see as a niche profession, but of the dynamics of global capitalism.

⁵ IMO 2011:7. Source:

<http://www.imo.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/ShipsAndShippingFactsAndFigures/TheRoleandImportanceofInternational-Shipping/Documents/December%202011%20update%20to%20July%202011%20version%20of%20International%20Shipping%20Facts%20and%20Figures.pdf>, retrieved 7/7/2015.

⁶ Source: <http://www.ics-shipping.org/shipping-facts/shipping-and-world-trade/number-and-nationality-of-world%27s-seafarers>; retrieved 6/18/2015.

⁷ This is a quote from the Chairman’s opening remarks by Efthimios Mitropoulos, Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization, London, 6 October 2005. Source:

http://www.imo.org/blast/mainframe.asp?topic_id=1028&doc_id=5300, retrieved 2/11/2015

Why Maritime Piracy?

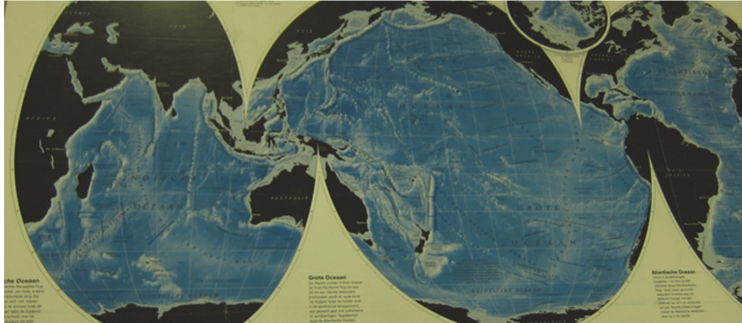


Image 1

My interest in maritime piracy does not grow out of an academic or even private interest in anything maritime, but rather in an interest in the anthropological study of security. Other than a relative who is an international seafarer, I had no other contacts to the maritime world when I started this project. I cannot sail and I had no fascination for or knowledge about the ocean. I was, like so many other consumers, completely oblivious to the influence of global shipping on our lives. I had previously done research on civilian perceptions of security in connection with violent conflict. The analyses I provided in that project grew out of an interest in state-building processes and the role of national and social border-making as this related to perceptions of security (Mannov 2010). What happens, I wondered, to these theoretical staples of sovereignty, authority and rights as they relate to this group of civilians – seafarers – and their perceptions of security, when subjected to the infrastructural conditions of the ocean? As illustrated on the map of the world’s oceans above (See Image 1⁸), the world looks different when we focus on water rather than land. The global maritime industry as a field of study offers a radically different, fascinating and important view of what these themes might mean in practice.

“Piracy” and “armed robbery” are specific kinds of crimes committed at sea that are defined in legal terms, to which I will turn shortly. But for seafarers, regardless of such definitions, both crimes are referred to as “piracy” because they entail violent attacks at sea by intruders who wish to steal cargo, equipment and sometimes people (M. N. Murphy 2007). In this sense, piracy poses an occupational health risk. But more than that, these attacks pose existential risks to seafarers, in the sense that they threaten

⁸ I took this photograph on board a merchant ship I visited. Consider also the navigational charts under “locating piracy” in this introduction (pp 29 - 30). Also here, the ocean stands out, whereas the land seems to fall into the background.

their lives and livelihoods, effecting the lives of their loved ones as well. Piracy is, however, not the only existential risk that seafarers face. Piracy was my initial focus, but as fieldwork progressed, it became clear that seafarers were not particularly preoccupied with piracy. Instead, economic security emerged as a central theme among many of my seafaring informants. It became clear to me that privileging piracy as an extreme and sensational work condition, as it had been presented in some of the media, offered a specific perception of piracy that was not mirrored among most of my seafaring informants. Contrary to these perceptions, I argue that because the global maritime supply chain is predicated on differences in order to generate profit, maritime piracy unfolds as a multidimensional phenomenon, in which the risks it implies, offers opportunities for economic *and* existential losses, but also gains, for both seafarers and shipowners.

In addition to this structural argument, I demonstrate how these multidimensional risks are embedded in individual itineraries, where maritime piracy was simply one piece in a larger puzzle that has been informed by the inner workings of a global industry. Considering this perspective, I do not focus on contemporary maritime piracy as an extraordinary work condition with which seafarers must contend. Instead, this dissertation is an analysis of seafarers' entangled and unequal positions within the maritime global supply chain. Contemporary maritime piracy emerges as a case through which we may understand how seafarers grasp economic opportunities for existential security as they open and close along globally connected itineraries.

A Reading Itinerary: Orders & Scales

In what follows, I suggest how this research may be positioned within the anthropological literature and offer a description of how I use the central analytical terms and themes I pursue throughout the dissertation, including Global Connections, Security and Risk, and Economy. With these points of orientation in mind, I present the legal definitions of contemporary piracy, the geographical delimitations of the areas deemed 'risk areas' and a brief introduction to the history and mechanisms of maritime piracy. I conclude with a brief description of the seven analytical chapters. I offer these explanations here, and throughout the dissertation, with both shipping industry and anthropological audiences in mind.

Positioning within the anthropological literature

In order to argue that maritime piracy unfolds as a multidimensional phenomenon that creates losses and gains and to demonstrate how this links up to international seafarers' attempts to grasp economic opportunities for existential security, I draw on many sub-

disciplines within anthropology. Of particular note is the sub-field of maritime anthropology which includes research topics that stretch thematically from marine biology and the charting of waves (Helmreich 2009; Helmreich 2011; Helmreich 2013; Telesca 2015), to studies on harbors (Chalfin 2010), maritime politics and history (Ho 2006; J. Dua and Menkhaus 2012; Ben-Yehoyada 2013) and of course, seafarers⁹ (S. McKay 2014; S. McKay 2007; S. McKay 2010; Sampson 2013; Swift 2011; G. M. Lamvik 2002; Fajardo 2011; Galam 2012; Abila and Tang 2014; Knudsen 2005). Closely related to these studies and my own project is the field of maritime history in which perceptions of oceanic space, maritime empires and maritime piracy have been illuminating (Wigen 2011; S. J. Hansen 2009; Eklöf 2006; Lapouge 2004; Braudel 1972; Dilke 1987; Kirk 2005). But considering that the ocean, and in particular shipping, serves as a medium for social connections (Hau'ofa 1994), many themes of anthropological inquiry flow into this maritime anthropological project: globalization, economy, law and politics. More specifically, this project offers insights into the themes of risk and security, work and labor, migration, violence, and existentialism. Of course, this dissertation cannot and has no intention of offering a comprehensive account of all these themes of anthropological inquiry. I position anthropologist Anna Tsing's notion of *global connections* (Tsing 2000; Tsing 2005; Tsing 2009; Tsing 2012a) as a central analytical hub and through this move, I am able to embrace the field's heterogeneity, diversity, inequality, scales and fragmentations that the project encompasses and the list of themes suggests. In other words, just as my field consists of a series of global connections, this dissertation also consists of a series of analytical connections across sub-field inquiries.

To this end, I engage with a variety of understandings of "economy", "risk" and "security" and how these understandings intersect along global itineraries within what I call the *maritime global supply chain*. As a point of departure, I am interested in analytically pursuing risks to seafarers' lives, and hence, how the security of human existence is perceived and practiced as "collectives of various orders and scales" (Holbraad and Pedersen 2013, 8). My reference to "orders and scales" addresses the spatial, temporal and social relationships in my field that scramble what sociologist Saskia Sassen refers to as "nested hierarchies" (Sassen 2003), in which the world is ordered from big to small, medieval to modern or from cheap to expensive (See also Latour 1996, 2–5). Instead, my field has been determined by a dynamic set of maritime itineraries that stretch across the globe, and challenges the oscillation between the local and the global and demands a re-ordering of the big and the small (Tsing 2000:338). In this maritime field, one moves through, creates and engages with different scales and orders of value

⁹ This list is not comprehensive, but I have highlighted representative studies that are central contributions of anthropologists who have focused their research on international seafarers.

among human and non-human commodities, which become embedded in seafarers' perceptions of piracy, their occupational health, and more broadly, in their lives and livelihoods. In order to navigate through this maritime field of various scales, we will need some terminology, to which I now turn.

Central Terminology

In what follows, I present the central analytical ideas that are highlighted throughout the dissertation. I begin with *global connections*, which leads me to Anna Tsing's work on *global supply chains* (Tsing 2009; Tsing 2012a) and my own further development of this concept, which I refer to as *itineraries*. Thereafter, I address how my empirical material speaks to various analytical notions of *risk* and *security* and finally, the divergent yet connected ways in which *economy* is understood and embedded in my material and analyses. One of the central and more general realizations I came to in my analytical work was that themes such as Global, Risk, Security and Economy *also* functioned as emic¹⁰ frames within which my informants perceived and understood their experiences. They did not, however, always share the same understanding of the frame itself. The tensions between my informants' varying perceptions of these themes and the entangled conditions informing these perceptions has been an ongoing characteristic of my field and of this analysis.

Defining "The Field": Global Connections

The term "global" suggests a kind of autonomous and whole unit that is separate from the 'local'. I find it more instructive, however, to view the global as constructed as a disparate, fluid set of people, places, things, motivations, and circumstances, which, in my field, are connected across space. In her work on environmentalism and global connections, anthropologist Anna Tsing laments a common analytical oscillation, explaining: "We know the dichotomy between the global blob and local detail isn't helping us" (Tsing 2005, 58). Tsing suggests that one way of thinking about how to connect the analytical dots between connections in a global economy is to think through *global supply chains* (Tsing 2009; Tsing 2012b). Her reference to *global supply chains* is firstly, emic:

¹⁰ In anthropology, "Emic" is often used to refer to the ways in which our informants describe their experiences, whereas "Etic" addresses the ways in which the analyst describes these experiences. The borders between the two can be very blurry. For a more detailed description of the anthropological terms "emic" and "etic" (which are etymologically not related to "ethics"), see: <http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=qualitative&pageid=icb.page340911>, retrieved 7/14/2015.