Trade between France and Sweden in the Eighteenth Century

Pierrick Pourchasse

France and Sweden have maintained commercial relations for a long time. As early as the Middle Ages, France received furs, herring, timber, tar and iron from Sweden whereas it shipped salt, wine and textile products to Scandinavia.

The authorities, fully aware of the importance of these exchanges, signed commercial agreements. In 1499, a first treaty stipulated that the merchants of the two kingdoms could do business quite safely in both countries. In the next century, Gustavus Vasa tried to increase Swedish exports and, in order to do this, wanted to make trade agreements. In 1541, one of his assistants, François de Trebow, was sent to the court of Francis I, king of France. Sweden's aim was to do business directly with France without using Dutch intermediaries. The treaty, signed in 1542, stipulated that the Swedes could buy French salt without paying export duties. Some years later (1559), new letters from

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the French king allowed Swedish merchants to do everything they wanted in order to sell their goods in France. They could settle and even adopt French nationality. Nevertheless, the Wars of Religion prevented the exchanges from increasing. In the first half of the seventeenth century, new treaties were drawn up[1]. However, transportation was generally carried out by English, Danish and Dutch ships.

This situation changed during the reign of Louis XIV. Colbert, the most important minister, understood that Sweden had the raw materials he needed to build a powerful navy. The possibility of receiving supplies from Sweden was a means to win battles and it became necessary to have direct contacts because the Dutch Republic was an enemy. The reign of Louis XIV became a very active time for trade between France and Sweden. A company for Northern trade was created in Rouen.[2] A treaty was signed in 1698 in which France granted Swedish ships exemption from taxes. The first Swedish consul was established in Bordeaux in 1705.[3] In spite of these measures to increase direct trade between the two countries, the Dutch continued to control the maritime routes until the 1730s.

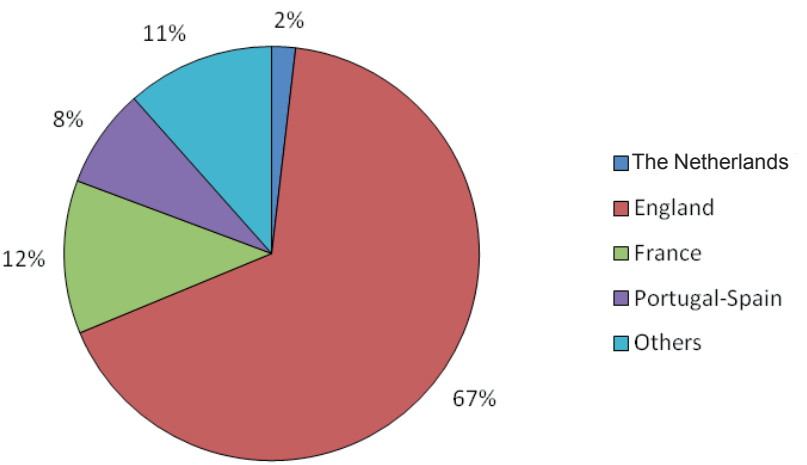
Trade between France and Sweden developed in the eighteenth century, following the Great Northern War. The Scandinavian kingdom was looking for new outlets in Southern Europe, and Marseilles became the centre of distribution for Swedish products in the Mediterranean. After the publication of the *Produkplakat* in 1724, Swedish ships visited French ports more and more and the merchants' networks between the two countries were strengthened. This article describes some of the exchanges between France and Sweden in the eighteenth century by focusing on the reasons for increasing trade relations, the connections with other international traffic and the domination of these routes by Swedish merchants.

Traditional exchanges

France bought raw materials in Sweden for its naval shipyards. The size of the French forests made the country self-sufficient with the exception of certain pine or fir products, such as small masts. France, however, was not an important customer for Swedish timber, although it was the second-largest customer for planks from Gothenburg but still far behind England. Usually ships which

came to Western Europe to deliver iron had timber down in the hold to protect their hull. France also bought saw timber from the port of Viborg.

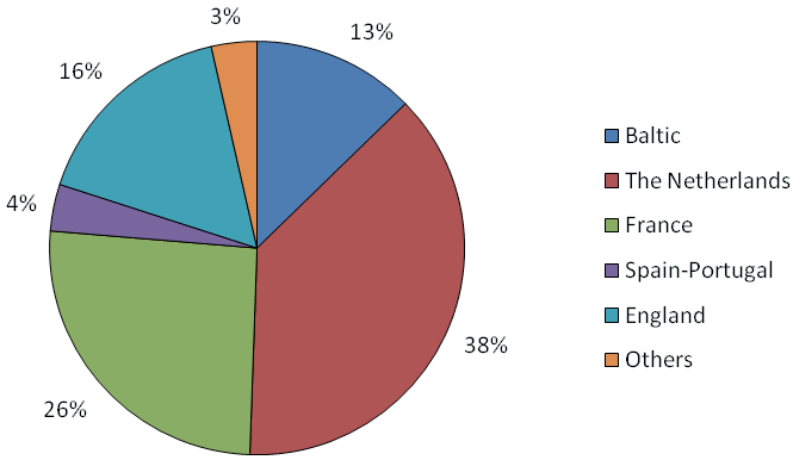
Exports of planks from Gothenburg, 1720–1790



Source: Ivan Lind, *Göteborgs handel och sjöfart 1637–1920. Historisk-statistisk översikt*. Gothenburg, 1923, tab. 42 and tab. 49.

Tar was a most important product for the French navy. In the years 1730–1735, France was second behind the Dutch Republic for tar imports[4]. After this date, Swedish statistics regrouped all the countries of Southern Europe under the same heading and it is not possible to pick out France. The purchases by Southern Europe increased regularly in the eighteenth century. At the end of the period, it was the largest customer for pitch and tar ahead of countries around the Baltic Sea and Great Britain. From 1784 to 1790, France was the first importer in this group with 54 per cent of the barrels, way ahead of Portugal, Spain and Italy.

Exports of pitch and tar from Stockholm, 1730–1735



Source: Bertil Boëthius and Eli -F. Heckscher, *Svensk Handelsstatistik*. Stockholm, 1938.

For Colbert, tar was a strategic commodity. At the end of the seventeenth century he wanted to limit French imports of this product and aimed to make France a producer for naval requirements. To do so, a Swedish specialist by the name of Elias Åhl came with a group of workers to create several centres of tar production in the French forests and teach the local workers Swedish techniques. In 1663, a first centre began to produce tar and, within ten years, a genuine national production was organized in Guyenne and Provence. This affair was not a great success.[5] The Dutch lowered the prices of Swedish products in order to hold on to their market and to destroy the new French production. The quality of Swedish tar was much better and the French product was considerably more expensive despite the lower price of transport.[6] However, throughout the eighteenth century, the French continued producing second quality tar while at the same time being obliged to buy Swedish tar.

France was an exception in Western Europe exporting more than it imported in its relations with Northern Europe. In fact, compared to its English and

Dutch competitors, France produced different goods that all the countries of the North needed and particularly Scandinavia.

The main French product exported to Scandinavia was salt. Up to the beginning of the 1770s, the exports to Northern countries were dominated by France and Portugal.

Exports of salt to the Baltic, 1720–1789 (in lasts over 5 years)

	Total Last	France Last	%	Portugal Last	%	Medit. Last	%	England Last	%
1720–1729	264 592	128 456	48,5	97 411	36,81	1 271	0,5	12 836	4,9
1730–1739	276 560	133 203	48,2	80 191	29,0	31 043	11,2	14 842	5,4
1740–1749	334 825	160 611	48,0	97 255	29,0	48 482	14,5	12 259	3,7
1750–1759	340 060	147 314	43,3	100 475	29,5	62 398	18,3	17 289	5,1
1760–1769	377 762	157 559	41,7	115 229	30,5	69 987	18,5	24 377	6,5
1770–1779	375 532	72 023	19,2	102 710	27,4	140 093	37,3	47 177	12,6
1780–1789	447 309	77 570	17,3	126 027	28,2	112 342	25,1	109 132	24,4

Source: Nina Z. Bang and K. Korst, *Tabeller over skibsfart og varentransport gennem Øresund 1661–1783 og gennem Storebaelt 1701–1748*. 3 vols, Copenhagen, 1930–1945; and Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen, Øresunds Toldkammer.

Sweden was one of the main customers of salt coming from Southern Europe. According to the Sound Toll Registers, Swedish increase in demand for salt was exceptional. Its purchases during the period 1785–1789 were the equivalent of those of Danzig, Königsberg and Riga put together, but France appeared to be a second supplier of salt to Sweden.

Exports of salt to the Baltic Sweden (in lasts over 5 years)

Source: Bang and Korst, *Tabeller...*, op. cit.; and Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen, Øresunds Toldkammer.

Nevertheless, the Swedish market was special: Baltic ports bought salt from Portugal while Kattegat ports bought salt from France. This difference can be explained by several factors. In the eighteenth century, the big ships from the Swedish ports of the Baltic left in great numbers for the Mediterranean. For them, the French ports of the Atlantic salt area were too far away from the ports of destination (Marseilles, Leghorn or Barcelona). However, most of the French salt ports could not receive ships of more than 150 last due to shallow water. Consequently, in the Sound registers, almost all the salt of Italy or Spain went to Swedish or Finnish harbours (96 per cent in 1775). The difference between the markets was another reason. French salt of the Atlantic contained clay and had a grey colour and this particularity made this salt the best for preserving fish. Therefore, the Swedish ports of the Kattegat needed this product for their fisheries. According to Staffan Högberg, there was also a big increase of salt import from the French Atlantic coast, due to the very high demand

made by the herring fisheries for salt fish later destined to be re-exported.[7] On the other hand, the cities of the Baltic preferred salt from Italy, Spain or Portugal which was very white and thus preferred by the consumers. A document from 1725, for example, explains that the Swedish did not like the French salt for domestic use and preferred buying white salt from Portugal or Mediterranean countries.[8]

At the end of the eighteenth century in Le Croisic, the main French port for the salt trade, situated close to Nantes, there were more Swedish ships than Dutch. The latter had since the seventeenth century been the largest customer of the French salt production of the Atlantic.

Destinations of Swedish ships leaving Nantes in 1758
(the salt is loaded in Le Croisic)

Name	T	Origin	From	To
Le Saint Jean	60	Stockholm	Bordeaux (ballast)	Salt to Gothenburg
La Florentia	45	Stockholm	Stockholm	Lest to Bordeaux
Le Saint Nicolas	450	Gothenburg	Hamburg	Salt and brandy to Gothenburg
La Justice	420	Stockholm	Dover (ballast)	Salt and flints to Stockholm
La Fortune	60	Varberg	Varberg	Salt to Varberg
L'Elisabeth	400	Gothenburg	Gothenburg	Salt to Gothenburg
La Maria	72	Gothenburg	Gothenburg	Salt to Gothenburg
La Paix & La Fortune	250	Stockholm	Bordeaux (ballast)	Salt and brandy to Gothenburg
La Catherine	60	Halmstad	Halmstad	Salt and brandy to Halmstad
Le Gothembourg	90	Gothenburg	Morlaix (ballast)	Salt and brandy to Gothenburg
Les Sept Frères	80	Gothenburg	London (ballast)	Salt to Gothenburg
La Catherine	60	Gothenburg	Gothenburg	Salt to Gothenburg
La Demoiselle Marie	68	Uddevalla	Halmstad	Salt to Uddevalla

Source: Riksarkivet, Stockholm, Kommerskollegium, Huvudarkivet, Skrivelser från Konsuler Nantes, E VI a: 347.

The second category of French products sold in Northern Europe was that of wine and brandy. Of the wine that passed the Sound, 80 to 90 per cent came from France. But Sweden was not a great customer for French wines. The taxes imposed by the Scandinavian kingdom put a brake on wine consumption: "Bordeaux wines could only be imported into Sweden in large barrels not in small casks or bottles. Customs duty was high from 70 to 80 livres tournois per barrel".[9] However, wines from Languedoc were part of Scandinavian trade with Southern Europe. After delivering their products in Marseilles, Toulon, Leghorn or Genoa, the captains returned to the North with Italian or Spanish salt and wine from Languedoc.[10] Jean-Antoine Butini, the Swedish consul in Marseilles, thus benefitted from this and from the excellent location of Marseilles for organising wine trade for Swedish ships between the Mediterranean and Northern Europe. Similarly for salt, the Swedish ships also loaded great quantities of wine in Italy and Spain. France kept the position of first supplier throughout the century.

Ports importing French wine in the Baltic (in hectoliters over 5 years)

	1725–1729		1734–1738		1743–1747		1785–1789	
	hl	%	hl	%	hl	%	hl	%
Copenhagen	22 995	16,7	66 483	17,5	70 809	13,2	71 198	7,9
Danzig	43 182	31,3	91 107	24,0	156 232	29,2	59 601	6,6
Königsberg	7 824	5,7	25 197	6,6	30 799	5,8	153 249	17,0
Lübeck	36 438	26,4	85 757	22,6	114 827	21,5	120 865	13,4
St Petersburg	6 029	4,4	11 151	2,9	28 002	5,2	131 833	14,6
Stettin	3 179	2,3	30 603	8,1	59 830	11,2	262 202	29,1
Stockholm	9 143	6,6	43 956	11,6	44 650	8,4	30 476	3,4
	138 056	93,3	379 107	93,4	534 481	94,5	902 158	91,9

Source: Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen, Øresunds Toldkammer.

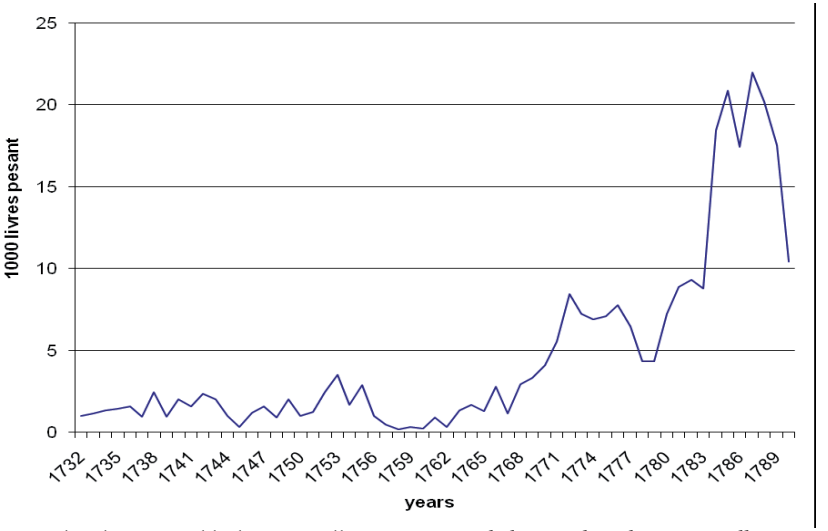
At the end of the Ancien Régime, the Scandinavians countries dominated the exports of French brandy. Between 1785 and 1789, Danish ships picked up 90 per cent of their cargoes at Toulon and Marseille and 37 per cent at Sète whilst 23 per cent left from the latter port on Swedish ships.[11] The Sund Toll Registers indicate that these Swedish ships delivered the brandy to many Baltic ports. Of the 73 Stockholm ships loaded with brandy, 27 were destined for the Swedish capital and 26 for Prussia (Stettin, Königsberg, Danzig, etc). Imports from Stockholm slowly progressed at the end of the century. On the other hand, according to the French consular services in Sweden, the port of Gothenburg received large quantities of brandy and tea from France, which were later smuggled into Scotland and Ireland.[12]

New exchanges in the eighteenth century

Iron was essential to Swedish trade. The British market was the largest customer for Swedish iron in the eighteenth century, accounting for more than 50 per cent of the total production. As a consequence there was not a large amount of Swedish iron production available to the other European markets. The Southern European share constituted around 10 per cent but it increased regularly. In fact, total purchases tripled in the second half of the century.

France was not a major market until the 1770s. The country had its own production which, in case of necessity, could be supplied from Spain. For the Swedes, France was a small market despite the bad quality of French iron which rusted very quickly.[13] However, in the second half of the eighteenth century, the situation changed and France became a major customer for Swedish iron. The volume of imports totalled nearly 10 000 tons at the end of the 1780s. At the time, France was the first country in Southern Europe to buy Swedish iron.

Exports of Swedish iron to France (1.000 000 livres pesant[14])



Source : Riksarkivet Stockholm, (B. Gille, *Les origines de la grande industrie métallurgique en France*, Paris, 1947).

There were two connected reasons to explain this increase of exports of Swedish iron to France. Firstly, France's economic development was at that time comparable to that of Great Britain. French iron producers had many difficulties in meeting the demand, especially that of the arsenals. Letters from French merchants preserved in the archives of Scandinavian firms[15] give the impression that there was a very great demand in France for Swedish products. Naturally, Scandinavian businesses made efforts to reply as quickly as possible to these orders so as to make a profit from good prices.[16] The Swedish iron masters were interested in this new market which needed not only iron bars, but also manufactured products. The second reason was French economic policy. The mercantilist policy protected French ironmasters who took advantage of this situation. From 1720, speculation was "unchained and there were consequences all over the country".[17] The enormous increase in French iron prices caused the arrival of foreign iron, which had more attractive prices for the consumers.[18] In fact, from the 1770s onwards, the authorities, irritated by

the behaviour of the ironmasters and influenced by the new liberal ideas, let Swedish iron enter freely into French territory to put an end to speculation. For example, in 1776, the French navy agreed to the proposal of a Swedish merchant for the supply of iron and nails because the prices were much lower than those of national production.[19]

The French iron masters protested against this competition, which they declared illegal. Petitions and political claims tried to prevent the imports from Sweden. Many people claimed that this was the end of French industry and the impoverishment of the country.[20] However, the opponents of the mercantilist policy knew that the prohibition of Swedish iron would result in an increase in prices.[21] The free trade movement led by Turgot asserted that this competition was necessary for the good management of the market and eventually also the quality of French products. Furthermore, according to Turgot, "international exchanges favoured the complementarities between the nations and calmed relations between the people". Free trade was fundamental to obtain stability of prices because of its regulatory function[22], so "imports of iron from foreign countries made it possible to balance supply and demand on a global and natural market and to damp down the hazard of national circumstances".[23] In the second part of the eighteenth century, times had changed and mercantilist ideas no longer carried weight among the authorities, which meant Swedish merchants continued to sell freely in France.

France received many different products from the Swedish iron industry.[24] First, French industry needed Swedish bar iron for steel making because of the unsuitable quality of French iron, which could not be made into steel.[25] In addition, customs documents mentioned black iron, tinned iron, iron sheets, iron planks, iron wire and nails. The naval shipyards bought a lot of anchors. In his travel notes on trips made in Sweden between 1757 and 1769, the French metallurgist Jars expressed admiration for the Swedish production processes: "the beauty and solidity of the anchors that I have seen being made in Sweden with a number of pieces of iron welded between them prove that welding well done makes the welded parts just as solid as the rest of the article".[26] During the years 1751–1755, France was the main customer of the anchor made in Söderfors. Most of these anchors were intended for the East India Company in Lorient which at that time built a new fleet. Sometimes there were cannons in the shipments.[27] The main part of this artillery was used by the French East

India Company or by privateers. During the Seven Years War, a Gothenburg merchant delivered cannons to the navy in Brest.

The first French port for products of the Swedish iron industry was Marseilles. It accounted for 36 per cent of the French iron imports from Sweden and 19 per cent of steel imports during the years 1785–1789. According to the Scandinavian consul in Marseilles, J. F. Fölsch, the large Swedish exports to Provence and Languedoc were due to the status of the port of Marseilles which offered low customs tariffs.[28] Consequently, Marseilles thus became the warehouse and the redistribution centre for Swedish products in the Mediterranean region. From Marseilles the products were shipped to North Africa or the Levant.[29] The Swedish ship-owners made Marseilles their Mediterranean base where they organised their tramping activities in Southern Europe before returning home loaded with Mediterranean products, such as wine from Sète or salt from Cagliari or Ibiza. Swedish financial interest became even more important, since after the American War of Independence, Dutch activity in the Mediterranean decreased suddenly. The Scandinavian countries benefited from this decline and became a major player in Mediterranean trade which was, from that time, much more open.

Foreign ships in Marseilles (total)

Dates	Dutch	English	Danish and Swedish
1730–1739	244	748	37
1740–1749	685	298	195
1750–1759	606	588	390
1760–1769	786	331	424
1770–1179	682	482	513
1780–1789	261	260	1106
	3 264	2 707	2 665

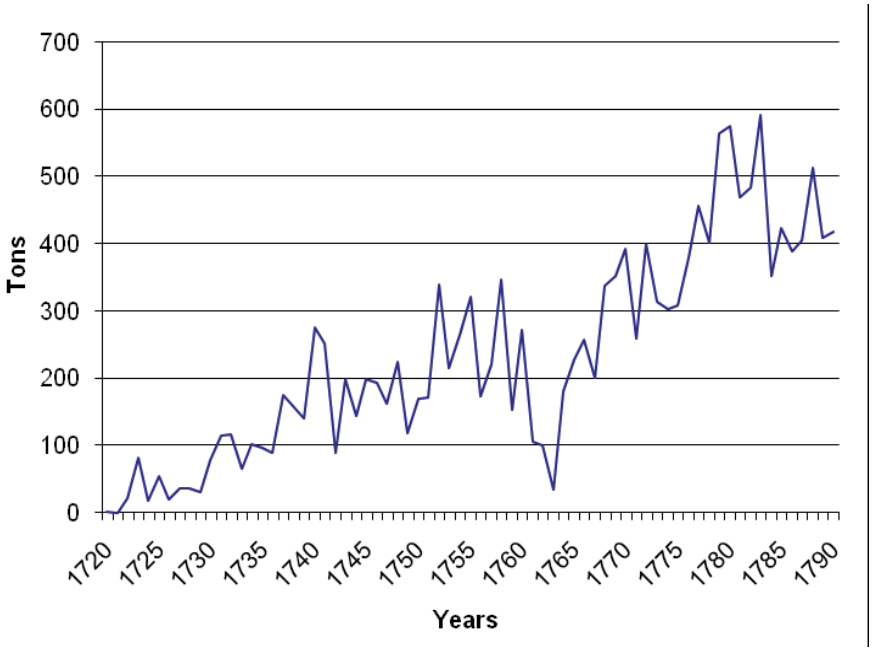
Source: Charles Carrière, 'Image du capitalisme hollandais au XVIIIe siècle. Le miroir marseillais', in: M. Aymard (dir.), *Dutch Capitalism and World Capitalism. Capitalisme hollandais et capitalisme mondial*. Maison de Sciences de l'Homme-Cambridge University Press, Paris-Cambridge, 1982, p. 177.

Some of the Swedish iron was used in the slave trade. In 1756, Stierling, the Swedish consul in Nantes, the first French harbour for the trade with Africa, wrote a document in which he wanted to increase the imports of Swedish products used for slave trade.[30] He indicated that this market could be prosperous because the merchants did not pay taxes on that kind of products when entering France.[31] The cargo of the slave-trade ships usually included iron bars to trade in Africa, but the origin of the products was rarely indicated. Sometimes, however, the bills of loading gave information: for example, in 1791, the ship *L'Antoinette* had 146 iron bars from Norrköping to trade in Africa.[32]

France was not only an iron importing country. A somewhat surprising export to Northern Europe was pots and cauldrons from Normandy.[33] This proto-industry, spread over several centres of production, was specialised in the making of pots and cauldrons of cast iron. Sweden sometimes bought these products which were made of Swedish iron bars. In 1743, according to the Sound Toll Registers, Swedish ships left Rouen with 767 kilos of cast-iron pots.

Brass was another metal of great importance in the exchanges between France and Sweden.[34] In Normandy, the pin factory around Rugles (Pays d'Ouche) needed a large quantity of brass. Every year 15 000 bundles of brass wire were imported from Sweden.[35] Consequently, France was one of the main customers for this Swedish product.

Imports of brass from Sweden 1720–1790 (in tons)



Source: Bang and Korst, *Tabeller...*, op. cit.; and Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen, Øresunds Toldkammer.

France sometimes bought ships from Sweden and the Swedish shipyards regularly tried to sell their ships abroad. In 1728, a captain from Saint-Malo declared to customs that he had bought his ship in Sweden before returning to France with wood and iron. In 1755, a French diplomat in Stockholm wrote a letter praising the good quality and low cost of Swedish ships. To conclude, he indicated that the owner of a shipyard (he did not specify which one) had two ships available and had reserved them for him.[36]

From time to time, Petersen & Bedoire from Stockholm sent proposals to the French East India Company.[37] One of the first offers ended in a sale: a ship built by the shipyard Terra Nova belonging to Carlos and Claes Grill was sold to a ship-owner who rented ships to the Company.[38] Pleased with this first

sale, the Swedish firm indicated that it had "two ships equally good and solidly built all in oak. The first, around 1 100 tons... The second, a frigate of 8 to 900 tons, with ports for 30 to 40 cannon and built for war and trading …" available to the Company. The first one was sold "with all masts, ship's boats and long-boat, without counting the carving, woodwork, paintwork and tackle, for the sum of eleven hundred thousand dalers of copper which, at the present rate of exchange equals 63,000 Dutch florins".[39] Petersen & Bedoire were aware of having probably overstated the price, and were trying to bargain,[40] but the Company finally refused to buy the ships, the reason being their unsuitability for their trade.

There were not many new French products in the eighteenth century. Sweden bought French colonial products such as sugar, coffee and indigo, but in small quantities.[41]

Exports of French colonial products to the Baltic 1784–1789 (in tons)

	Sugar Tons	%	Coffee Tons	%	Indigo Kilograms	%
Copenhagen	737,7	2,2	3 217,5	26,0	23 621,3	12,9
Lübeck	160,4	0,5	178,1	1,4	2 743,6	1,5
Stralsund	85,6	0,3	303,0	2,4	1 482,0	0,8
Stettin	17 879,8	54,2	2 923,4	23,6	29 191,3	15,9
Danzig	372,2	1,1	2 342,1	18,9	13 220,3	7,2
Königsberg	1 298,0	3,9	622,8	5,0	51 341,7	28,0
Riga	629,1	1,9	373,2	3,0	1 788,1	1,0
St Petersburg	9 330,1	28,3	1 115,2	9,0	40 312,9	22,0
Stockholm	1 532,5	4,6	577,6	4,7	14 058,6	7,7
	32 025,4	97,1	11 652,9	94,1	177 759,8	96,9

Source: Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen, Øresunds Toldkammer.

A flow of trade controlled by the Swedish merchants

French merchants were not active in the Northern markets and exchanges between them were controlled by merchants from the North. Therefore, Swedish merchants had agents in France who took care of the businesses between the two countries. For example, Carlos and Claes Grill from Stockholm had three agents in Rouen, including the local Swedish consul, to sell their brass wire.[42]

Concerning Sweden, the immigrant Huguenots played a key role in the exchanges between the two countries. For them, it was easy to settle down in Sweden.[43] Since the arrival of the Walloons[44] there had been a tradition of hospitality in the Scandinavian kingdom and the king invited the French Protestants to take refuge in his country. The migrants could, without any difficulty, adopt Swedish nationality. Among these families two were synonymous with success and integration.

The Bedoire family was the most famous.[45] Jean Bedoire, a wig maker, arrived in Stockholm in 1665, and chose to become an iron and copper salesman. His children married into Stockholm's other prominent migrant families, such as Pauli, Lefebure, Toutin or Jennings. His son Jean Bedoire Jr. developed the business, which became one of the main exporters in the country. In 1739, he was one of the founders of the Swedish Insurance Company. One of his sons was appointed consul in Lisbon. Another son of Jean Bedoire Sr., Frederick, in partnership with his brother-in-law Hermann Petersen, became one of the richest businessmen in Sweden. The company specialized in the export of Swedish iron and the import of salt and wine. It was one of the major suppliers to the French East India Company. Petersen & Bedoire invested their profits in international trade and also in the production of brass and in sugar refining.[46] The family pursued its ties with the most prominent merchant families. The historian Jan Thomas Lindblad, when talking about the Bedoire family, evoked the picture of a clan.

The main merchants of Stockholm (1760)
(per cent of the market)

Export Name %	Import Name %
Jennings 19	Brandell 5
Lefebure 12	***Schröder*** 4
Petersen 7	Neuman 3
Tottie 7	Seton 3
Bohman 6	Liedroth 2
Grill 4	***Koschell*** 2
Wahrendorff 3	Kanzau 2
Alnoor 3	**Lefebure** 2
Hebbe 3	**Nettelblad** 2
Graber 3	Wahrendorff 2
67	28

Source : K. Samuelsson, *De stora*…, op. cit., pp. 234-235. (in bold the "clan Bedoire" families).

Source: F. Bedoire, *Hugenotternas*…, op. cit., pp. 232-233.

A second major family was the Lefebures. Henri Lefebure, who was married to Maria Bedoire, came from a Huguenot family which arrived in Sweden in the second half of the seventeenth century. His son Jean-Henry, married to his cousin, Charlotta Bedoire, continued the family trading business, which grew very fast. He specialized in the export of iron that he bought directly from the ironmaster. Henri Lefebure invested his profits in sugar refining and bought several forges. His fortune was considerable and divided as follows: 34 per cent turnover of capital (advance payments, stocks…), 11 per cent investment in trade companies, 10 per cent shares in ships, 5 per cent town properties, and 30 per cent forges and estates.[47] Lefebure was also involved in public affairs and politics: he represented the bourgeois of Stockholm in parliament, was one of the directors of the Saltmasters' Association and a deputy of the Ironmasters' Association.

Lefebure's reputation was somewhat tarnished when he was revealed to be one of those responsible for the speculation in 1765 which caused a serious financial crisis in the Scandinavian kingdom. Like his fellow accused, he was

imprisoned by the authorities.[48] Nothing remains of either the name or the business. His son left town for life in the country and took his wife's name, the Countess of Lillienberg, a niece of John Jennings. The continuity of the lineage was broken by the enrichment and the desire to become part of the aristocracy brought about by commercial success, which often happened among the great merchants of the eighteenth century.[49]

Bedoire's and Lefebure's successes were not linked to their French origin. Nevertheless they took advantage of their links with France to increase their business. They were basically Swedish merchants, connected to Swedish families and interested in the economy of their new country where they were active citizens.

The French merchants were not successful in Sweden but there was one example which showed that it was nevertheless possible to play a role in the economy of the Scandinavian kingdom. In the second half of the eighteenth century, in Normandy, the most important pin manufacturers tried to buy the brass wire they needed directly from Sweden. The Colombel business had close relations with its supplier, the widow Plomgren at Skultuna, near Nyköping. In exchange for an advance of 2 per cent Colombel obtained the total production of the factory. This contract ended when Plomgren went bankrupt in 1778. At the time, Plomgren owed 37 000 riksdaller banco to the French firm.[50]

Almost all the transportation between France and Sweden was carried out by Swedish ships. In the eighteenth century French ship-owners could not compete with the Dutch or the Scandinavians on the Northern routes. They were more interested by investments in colonial or Mediterranean trade. Therefore, French ships very rarely entered into the Baltic. At the end of the 1780s, there was an increase in French ships to Sweden in the Sound Toll Registers. However, Swedish ships seemed to have changed nationality due to the war with Russia in 1788.[51]

The French authorities were preoccupied with the absence of French trade in the North. For this reason they decided to draw up an agreement with Sweden and had the following idea. The Scandinavian Kingdom wanted to own an island in the Caribbean to produce sugar for its needs. France thought that having a warehouse free of taxes in a northern port could be the solution to increasing its direct trade in the Baltic area.[52] In the 1780s, France offered the island of Saint-Barthélemy to Sweden for advantages at the port of

Gothenburg.[53] The island was given in perpetuity with all the rights of property and sovereignty. All the public buildings were given to the new owner and the inhabitants became Swedish sovereigns but kept their rights, religions and properties. The results fell short of meeting French expectations.[54] The Swedish ship owners had great advantages in their own country and it was still difficult to compete with them. On the other hand, Swedish unwillingness resulted in the warehouse never receiving any goods even though rent was paid for the buildings and employees recruited.[55] In any case, this was not a great idea. At the end of the eighteenth century, the efficiency of new trade techniques and the development of commercial networks rendered this system useless. However, transferring Saint-Barthélemy to the Swedish authorities was not good business for French trade. The island became a new centre for smuggling and French merchants were very annoyed with this situation.[56]

Conclusion

This presentation of the exchanges between France and Sweden shows that although limited, they played a role in the economy of the two countries. The export of iron to Southern Europe allowed the Swedish Kingdom to avoid being too dependent on the British market. The port of Marseilles, which had closer relations with the Levant and Northern Africa, became a staple market to distribute the Swedish products in all Mediterranean regions. For France it was vital to buy products in Northern Europe to build a powerful navy. It was also a way for the liberal movement to force through their new ideas. For example, Turgot, one of the most important French ministers at the end of the *Ancien Régime*, used the imports of Swedish iron to defend his economic policy in his famous letter, "Lettre au Contrôleur-Général sur la marque des fers", published in 1773.

On the other hand these relations allowed the two countries to reinforce their international trade. The French East India Company needed Swedish products such as tar, iron or planks to build its ships sailing to Asia. Sweden sold different products for the French slave trade and thus entered into new international markets. Similarly France developed its colonial economy and found the northern markets it needed.

Sammanfattning

Handeln mellan Sverige och Frankrike utvecklades under 1700-talet, efter det stora nordiska kriget. Frankrike behövde marina produkter för att bygga upp sin arsenal. Landet var en av de viktigaste importörerna av svensk tjära och dessutom köpte man regelbundet virke från Göteborg. Sverige sökte vid denna tid nya marknader i södra Europa, och Marseilles blev ett centrum för svensk handel i Medelhavsområdet och Nordafrika. De svenska brukspatronerna var intresserade av dessa nya marknader som förutom stångjärn behövde manufakturprodukter. Det franska Ostindiska kompaniet var t.ex. det första bolag som köpte ankarmaterial från Söderfors bruk under 1750-talet. Å andra sidan exporterade Frankrike sina traditionella varor som salt, vin och konjak till Sverige. Det franska saltet var främst ämnat för strömmingsfisket längs Nordsjökusten, medan det svenska Östersjöområdet föredrog vitt salt från Sydeuropa. De invandrade hugenotterna som etablerat sig i Stockholm spelade en viktig roll i detta utbyte mellan de båda länderna.

Trots att utbytet mellan länderna inte var särskilt stort, spelade det en viktig roll i de båda ländernas ekonomi. Järnexporten till Sydeuropa förhindrade att Sverige blev alltför beroende av den brittiska marknaden. För Frankrikes del var de svenska varorna av vital betydelse för att bygga upp en slagkraftig flotta. Handelsutbytet utgjorde dessutom en möjlighet för liberala krafter att driva igenom sina nya idéer. Importen av svenskt järn garanterade nämligen en prisstabilitet. Tidigare hade de franska brukspatronerna varit skyddade av den franska statens merkantilistiska politik, något som lett till spekulationsaffärer utan försök att tillfredställa marknadens behov. Frihandelsrörelsen hävdade att denna konkurrens var helt nödvändig för kvaliteten på de franska produkterna och för att marknaden skulle fungera väl.

Noter

[1]André Rebsomen, *Recherches historiques sur les relations commerciales entre la France et la Suède*. Bordeaux, Féret & fils, 1921.
[2]Prosper Boissonnade and Pierre Charliat, *Colbert et la Compagnie de commerce du Nord (1661-1689)*. Paris, Marcel Rivière, 1930.
[3]Leos Müller, *Consuls, Corsairs and Commerce – The Swedish Consular Service and Long-distance Shipping*, 1720-1815. Uppsala, Studia Historica Upsaliensa, 213, 2004, p. 42.
[4]Bertil Boëthius, et Eli -F. Heckscher, *Svensk Handelsstatistik*. Stockholm, 1938.
[5]A. Gielen-Tisserand, *Colbert et la Suède (1661-1683)*. Ecole des Chartes, Position des thèses, 1983, p. 97. This setback was accentuated by the misappropriation of funds by Elias Åhl, the Swedish master burner who had come to train the French workers.
[6]Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen, Kommercekollegiet, 1129. In Rouen, in April 1783, the local tar was worth 52 livres a barrel as against 53 livres for the Swedish tar.
[7]Staffan Högberg, *Utrikeshandel och sjöfart på 1700 talet*. Bonniers, Lund, 1969, p. 216.
[8]Archives Nationales B3 418, Mémoire instructif pour M. le Comte de Serestre, ministre plénipotentiaire de sa Majesté auprès de Roi de Suède du 28 juin 1725.
[9]Archives Nationales, B3 418, *Note sur le commerce de la France avec la Suède* (undated).
[10]J.-C. Gaussent., 'Un aspect du commerce maritime au XVIII[e] siècle: l'exportation des vins et eaux-de-vie par les bâtiments du Nord', *Bulletin du centre des espaces atlantiques*, 3, 1987, p. 85-126.
[11] Ibid.
[12]Archives Nationales, B3 418, Remarques relatives au commerce particulier de Gothembourg (undated).
[13]André Rebsomen, *Recherches historiques* …, op. cit., p. 47.
[14]1 000 000 "livres pesant" is equal to 500 tons.
[15]Wahrendorffska arkivet, Åkers styckebruk, Letters of the firm Thomson & Wittfoth from Bordeaux.
[16]K.-G. Hildebrand, "Foreign… ", op. cit., p. 48.
[17]B. Gille, *Les origines de la grande industrie métallurgique en France*, Paris, 1947, p. 41-42.
[18]E.-F Heckscher, 'Un grand chapitre… ', op. cit, p. 130.
[19]Archives du Service Historique de la Défense, Brest,1 E 523, f. 325.
[20]AN F12 1305, Observations sur le commerce der fers (1775).
[21]Archives Départementales de l'Orne, C 39, courrier du suddélégué d'Alençon (1772).
[22]Turgot, *Ecrits économiques*, Paris, 1970, p. 88: "The total freedom to buy and sell is, therefore, the only means of insuring, on the one hand, for the seller, a price that will encourage production; on the other, for the customer, best quality goods at the lowest price."
[23]C. Morilhat, *La prise de conscience du capitalisme. Economie et philosophie chez Turgot*. Paris, 1988, p. 45.
[24]Svenska Riksarkivet, Kommerskollegium, Skrivelser från konsuler Nantes 1752-1818, Correspondence of the consul Stierling dated 31 December 1758. In February 1758, Le Florentia delivered 400 barrels of steel, 220 bars and 84 800 pounds of iron, 400 barrels of white iron, 20 barrels of nails, 426 planks, 40 stoves, 2 750 pounds of sheet metal and 1 375 of brass wire with some ballast to Bordeaux.

[25]C. Ballot, *L'introduction du machinisme dans l'industrie française*, Lille-Paris, 1923 (réimpression, Genève, 1978), pp. 490-492. In 1788, inspector Brown visited the steel factory at Amboise. There he noted supplies of 28 787 pounds of iron in bars from Sweden and Sanche told him that he found it impossible to convert French iron into steel.
[26]Diderot et d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie*…, op. cit., p. 48; G. Jars., *Voyages métallurgiques*, t.1, Lyon 1774, 416 p; t.2, Paris, 1780, 612 p; t. 3, Paris, 1781, 658 p.
[27]Riksarkivet, Stockholm, Gallica 418. Courrier de Babut du 1er avril 1760. During the Seven Year War, Babut of Nantes delivered canons to the arsenal in Brest on behalf of the merchant Cahman of Gothenburg.
[28]Riksarkivet, Stockholm, Gallica, Lettres du consul Fölsch à Marseille, 1780-1807. Letters of 19 August and of October 1785.
[29]Wahrendorffska arkivet, Åkers styckebruk, Letter from Fölsch & Hornbostel of 27 May 1788.
[30]Riksarkivet, Stockholm, Kommerskollegium, Skrivelser från konsuler Nantes 1752–1818, Mémoire du consul Stierling de Nantes du 17 septembre 1756.
[31]J. Boudriot, *Traite et navire négrier*. Paris, 1984, p. 68.
[32]J. Vidalenc, "La traite de nègres en France au début de la Révolution (1789-1793)", *Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française*, 1957, p. 61. Concerning the slave trade, a memoir notes that the rich colonists had acquired sugar mills in England because they "could not find any as well finished as in London", in particular because the English used Swedish iron (AN B3 418, Notes relative to commerce with Gothenburg).
[33]Richard Guy, 'La Grande Métallurgie en Haute-Normandie à la fin du XVIII[e] siècle', *Annales de Normandie*, no. 4, 1962, p. 263.
[34]E. Duchemin, *Le département de l'Eure avant la révolution*, Sotteville, undated, vol. 2, p. 531.
[35]Archives Nationales, F12 1321-1322, *Protestation des épingliers de Laigle, Rugles et autres lieux de la généralité d'Alençon contre la cherté du fil de laiton importé de Suède par les marchands de Rouen, à 160 livres le cent* (1713).
[36]AN, B3 418, Suède et Norvège, Mémoire concernant les chargements de bois de Mr. D'Havrincourt pour Mr. Le Garde des Sceaux du 29 septembre 1755.
[37]Archives du Service Historique de la Défense, Lorient, 1 P 292 l. 240, Courrier de Petersen & Bedoire de Lorient à Lavigne Buisson du 13 août 1764.
[38]Beauchesne Geneviève, *Histoire de la construction navale à Lorient*. Service Historique de la Marine, Vincennes, 1980, p. 174.
[39]Archives du Service Historique de la Défense, Lorient 1 P 292 l. 240, Courrier de Petersen & Bedoire du 15 avril 1766.
[40]Archives du Service Historique de la Défense, Lorient 1 P 292 l. 240, Courrier de Petersen & Bedoire du 25 août 1766.
[41]AN, B3 418, Note sur le commerce de la France avec la Suède : Les Suédois reçoivent très peu de sucre, de café et de cacao de France 'vu leur proximité de Copenhague d'où ils les importent à moindre frais. Ils les tirent aussi souvent de Hambourg et de la Hollande.'
[42]L. Müller, *The Merchant Houses*…, op. cit., p. 131.
[43]F. Puaux, *Histoire de l'établissement des protestants français en Suède*. Paris and Stockholm, G. Fischbacher et Emile Giron, 1891.
[44]L. Courtois, M. Dorban et J. Pirotte (dir.), *De fer et de feu: l'émigration wallonne vers la Suède : histoire et mémoire XVII[e]-XXI[e] siècle, Hommage au professeur Anders Florén*. Louvain-la-Neuve, Fondation wallonne Pierre-Marie and Jean-François Humblet, 2003.

[45]F. Bedoire, *Hugenotternas värld. Från religionskrigens Frankrike till skeppsbroadelns Stockholm*. Stockholm, Albert Bonniers Förlag, 2009.
[46]J. T. Lindblad, *Sweden's Trade with the Dutch Republic 1738-1795*. Assen, Van Gorcum, 1982, p. 51.
[47]K. Samuelsson, *De stora*…, op. cit., p. 122.
[48]AN, B1 620, Courrier de Hambourg du 7 mai 1765.
[49]J. T. Lindblad, *Sweden's Trade*…, op. cit., p. 52.
[50]K. Samuelsson, *De stora köpmanshusen* …, op. cit., p. 204.
[51]P. Pourchasse, *La France et le commerce de l'Europe du Nord au XVIII^e siècle*. PhD thesis, Lorient, 2003, p. 425.
[52]Archives Nationales, B3 419, courrier du 27 février 1784.
[53]Archives Départementales Loire-Atlantique, C 690 ; Martens, *Recueil des principaux traités*, 2nde éd., p. 744.
[54]AN, B1 606, Courrier du 20 mai 1787.
[55]AN, B1 606, Courrier du 21 juillet 1790, du 9 octobre 1790, du 6 septembre 1790.
[56]J. Tarrade, *Le commerce colonial de la France à la fin de l'Ancien Régime*. 1972, p. 618.