Ajalooline Ajakiri, 2011, 3/4 (137/138), 243–263

The timber trade in Pärnu in the second half of the seventeenth century*

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In the second half of the sixteenth and during the seventeenth centuries, shipbuilding and the construction of houses in Western Europe became heavily reliant on North European timber and other forest products – ash, pitch, and tar. As a result, the integration of Northern Europe into the Europe-centered world economy and the role of the region in international work division became even more evident. The export of timber and timber by-products in the Baltic Sea region was dominated by Danzig, Königsberg, and Riga,[1] but from 1670s export accelerated from the northern regions of the Baltic Sea,[2] like Narva, Nyen, Viipuri, etc. on the coast of the Gulf of Finland.[3] Although Tallinn – which was the biggest trade town in the region – exported firewood, sawlogs, pitch, and tar to a certain extent, its timber export remained modest due to limited forest resources of the town's hinterland.[4] However, for a number of port towns timber became the main export article during the last two decades of the

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1 Michael North, "The export of timber and timber by-products from the Baltic Region to Western Europe, 1575–1775", *From the North Sea to the Baltic: essays in commercial, monetary and agrarian history, 1500–1800*, ed. by M. North (Variorum, 1996), 1–14.

2 Thomas Lindblad, "Evidence of Dutch-Swedish trade in the 17th century", *Baltic affairs: relations between the Netherlands and North-Eastern Europe 1500–1800*, ed. by J. Ph. S. Lemmink and J. S. A. M. van Koningsbrugge (Nijmegen: Instituut voor Noorden Oosteuropese studies, 1990), 209.

3 Arnold Soom, "Narva metsakaubandus ja metsatööstus XVII sajandi lõpul", *Ajalooline Ajakiri* (1940), 59–61; Hel'mut Piirimyaé, "Sostav, ob"ëm i raspredelenie russkogo vývoza v 1661–1700 gg. cherez shvedskie vladeniya v Pribaltike na primere torgovli g. Narvý", *Skandinavskiĭ sbornik,* 5 (Tallinn, 1962), 72; Sven-Erik Åström, "Technology and timber exports from the Gulf of Finland: 1661–1740", *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, XXII:1 (1975), 2–5; Sven-Erik Åström, *From tar to timber: studies in Northeast European forest exploitation and foreign trade 1600–1860* (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1988), 28–31.

4 Arnold Soom, *Der Handel Revals im siebzehnten Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1969), 33–34.

seventeenth century. Political reasons and a growing demand for timber drove timber merchants from Western Europe to explore new markets in Northern Europe.

Timber export from Pärnu started in the mid-seventeenth century with statistical evidence dating back to 1652. During the next half century, timber became an important export article next to grain, flax, and hemp,[5] whereas timber by-products such as pitch and tar occupied a marginal export position.[6] The aim of this article is to provide an overview of the composition and volume of timber export from Pärnu in the second half of the seventeenth century and analyze the economic and political factors that influenced the process.

In comparison to Riga, Tallinn, and Narva, a few studies have been carried out about the trading history of Pärnu in the seventeenth century. Arnold Soom was among the earlier researchers who studied trade-related problems in Pärnu in the mid-seventeenth century against the background of other Estonian towns, emphasizing the economic and political measures taken by the Swedish central authorities, which subsequently had an impact on the development of the town as a trading environment. However, Soom did not touch upon the volume and types of commodities that passed through the town.[7] In one of his later studies about the history of timber trade and forest-based industry in Swedish Baltic provinces in the seventeenth century, Soom briefly discussed the plan of the central authorities to harness the potential of Pärnu in supplying Western Europe – and the Netherlands in particular – with timber.[8] The author of the current

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[5] According to Helmut Piirimäe, grain accounted for 68.4%, timber 24.9%, fur 2.9%, flax and hemp 2.8%, and other goods 1% of exports from Pärnu in 1683 (Helmut Piirimäe, "Pärnu kaubanduse suurus ja koostis XVII saj. lõpul", *Eesti NSV ajaloo küsimusi*, V, Tartu Riikliku Ülikooli Toimetised, vihik 223 (Tartu, 1968), 113). A similar trend occurs also in the 18th century. See e.g., "Geographische und historische Nachricht von der Stadt Pernau [...]", Verfasset im Jahre 1760 von Herrn Friedrich Thomas Zange [...], *Sammlung Russischer Geschichte*, Bd. IX, Stück 1 (St. Petersburg, 1764), 419; August Wilhelm Hupel, *Topographische Nachrichten von Lief- und Estland*, 1 (Riga, 1774), 285–286; *Eesti talurahva ajalugu 1,* ed. by Juhan Kahk (Tallinn: Olion, 1992), 399; *Eesti ajalugu IV: Põhjasõjast pärisorjuse kaotamiseni*, ed. by Mati Laur and Sulev Vahtre (Tartu: Ilmamaa, 2003), 182.

[6] Piirimäe, "Pärnu kaubanduse suurus ja koostis", 112.

[7] Arnold Soom, "Die Politik Schwedens bezüglich des Russischen Transithandels über die estnischen Städte in den Jahren 1636–1656", *Õpetatud Eesti Seltsi Toimetused,* XXXII (Tartu, 1940), 72–73, 191, 233–236; Arnold Soom, "Der baltische Getreidehandel im 17. Jahrhundert", *Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Handlingar,* Historiska Serien, 8 (Stockholm, 1961), 38, 77–79, 99, 168, 277.

[8] Arnold Soom, "Der ostbaltische Holzhandel und die Holzindustrie im 17. Jahrhundert", *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, 79 (1961), 80–100.

article has also briefly discussed the interest of the Dutch in timber export from Pärnu.[9] As yet, Helmut Piirimäe has been the only one to provide statistical data for his analysis of the composition and volume of trade from Pärnu, including the export of timber, by referring to the customs books of Pärnu from 1683, 1684, and 1698.[10]

Statistical data on the timber trade in Pärnu can be found in the customs reports covering the trading business of the city from 1652,[11] 1670, 1671, 1676, and 1677.[12] In addition, this article is based on the customs books of Pärnu referred to above from the years 1683,[13] 1684,[14] and 1698,[15] which were reviewed once again. To identify the economic and political factors that have influenced timber trade in Pärnu, the author has used the minutes[16] and correspondence of the Swedish Royal Board of Trade.[17] Namely, the Board discussed the matters of timber trade in Pärnu on several occasions between 1686 and 1688, which was prompted by the interests of the merchants of the Netherlands who wanted to shift the stocking of timber from the Danish and Norwegian market to Sweden, Riga and Pärnu included.

The composition of timber export and import from Pärnu

The two major articles of trade exported from Pärnu were staves and firewood – the first was counted in pieces and the other in fathoms (see the Table 1).[18] Other goods counted in pieces were masts, cants, booms, winch logs, pumps, aspen and ash blocks, and firs. The latter species of trees[19] show

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[9] Enn Küng, "Pärnu metsakaubandusest 17. sajandi viimasel veerandil", *Pärnumaa ajalugu*, vihik 3, artiklite kogumik 2 (Pärnu, 2000), 62–74.

[10] Piirimäe, "Pärnu kaubanduse suurus ja koostis", 98–131.

[11] Svenska Riksarkivet [RA], Livonica II, vol. 665.

[12] RA, Östersjöprovinsernas tull- och licenträkenskaper 1583–1707, vol. 44.

[13] Ajalooarhiiv [EAA], f. 278, n. 1, s. XXII:151.

[14] EAA, f. 1000, n. 1, s. 1395

[15] EAA, f. 278, n. 1, s. XXII:156.

[16] RA, Kommerskollegium, huvudarkivet, protokoll, A.I.a.1, vol. 32 (protokoll 1685, 1686); vol. 33 (protokoll 1687, 1688).

[17] RA, Kommerskollegium, huvudarkivet, registratur, B.I.a., vol. 25–26 (1686, 1687); *ibid.*, Kommerskollegium, huvudarkivet, kungliga brev och remisser, E.I.a., vol. 6–8 (1681–1687).

[18] The fathom in Riga corresponded to 3.96 m^3 in the 17th century (Velta Pāvulāne, *Rīgas tirdzniecība ar meža materiāliem XVII–XVIII gs: no Rīgas ekonomisko sakaru vēstures ar Krievu, Baltkrievu, Ukraiņu un Lietuviešu zemēm* (Rīgā: Zinātne, 1975), 153.

[19] In addition to these, there are records from the late 1680s referring to the export of oaks in connection with the fortification works from the hinterland of Pärnu around Viljandi.

the composition of the forests in the commercial hinterland of Pärnu. The hinterland of Pärnu extended up to Viljandi and Paide along the Pärnu River. Tartu County was outside the commercial scope of Pärnu, and due to big distances and poor logistical circumstances Russian goods were not brought to Pärnu.

Masts were exported from Pärnu in 1652 and in the 1670s; there are no data available on the later years. Spars, which were classified as ordinary (*gemeine*) and small (*kleine*), were of different lengths and diameters, ranging from 5 to 16 palms[20] according to customs reports. Consequently, the hinterland of Pärnu could not provide bigger spars.

Tabel 1. Export of timber products from Pärnu in the second half of the 17th century

Type of timber products	Unit	1652	1670	1671	1676	1677	1683	1684	1698
Staves (*Latten*)	piece	71300	19400	169500	157300	158860	219656	121650	190274
Masts (*Masten*)	″	16	200	27	1	31	–	–	–
Planks (*Bretter*)	″	–	–	–	735	2004	–	–	–
Cants (*Balkunen*)	″	–	398	339	124	320	542	773	2762
Booms (*Spiren*)	″	–	–	237	52	125	437	295	824
Winch-logs (*Hand Spicken*)	″	–	35 for thaler	50	–	–	40	–	–
Pumps (*Pumpen*)	″	265	932	713	380	493	811	209	1046
Aspen blocks (*Espen Klöter*)	″	–	90	93	45	79	390	215	747
Ash blocks (*Eschen Klöter*)	″	90	1310	778	84	104	1659	1470	4635
Fir (*Gränen*)	″	–	–	–	175	457	201	–	4867
Firewood (*Brennholz*)	fathom	175	372	359	160	219	384	545	557

[20] Palm is the measure of the length and thickness of timber. For example, the archival records of the 17th century indicate that the length of the 18-palm mast in the Netherlands and England corresponded to 72 feet, 19-palm to 75 feet, 20-palm to 78 feet, 21-palm to 82 feet, 22-palm to 84 feet, etc., which means that each diameter palm equalled ca. 3.8–4 feet of length, and the length of a 20-palm mast in the metric system is ca. 21.4 m. As a unit of thickness, 1 palm in the Dutch system corresponded to 0.0943 meters in Riga (Jānis Zemzaris, *Mērs un svars Latvijā 13.–19. gs.* (Rīga: Zinātne, 1981), 241). Thus the diameter of a 20-palm spar was ca. 1.88 metres.

Actually it is quite surprising that spars as short as these were specified as masts at all. However, the records on the trading quarrel discussed in 1685 at the office of the Governor General of Estonia indicate that in 1676 there were 20 masts with diameters ranging from 16 to 22 palms sent from Pärnu to Amsterdam.[21] It is interesting to note here that in the last two decades of the seventeenth century, the masts reaching to 24 palms (17 to 22 palms on average) were typical of export from Narva, but these masts originated from the forests of northwestern Russia.[22] A record number of masts – 200 pieces (96 masts in the range of 11 to 12 palms and 104 masts ranging from 5 to 9 palms) – were exported from Pärnu in 1670. The number of masts exported from Riga the same year was the biggest too – 305.[23] In 1676 and 1677 there were boards exported from Pärnu, but this was presumably related to re-export as some of the boards had been cleared earlier in Kokkola (Karleby), Finland. Further, a portion of the boards were marked as being sent to Kuressaare for fortification works. Staves exported from Pärnu were varied as well. They were differentiated based on their shape: round (*runde*); quality: ordinary (*ordinarie*) and top quality (*topplatten*); as well as their length: staves of 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 fathoms.[24] Ordinary staves prevailed, as the share of the so-called topplatten in export was very low (the ratio being 100:1). It is quite notable that the ordinary staves were rather short, usually ranging from 3 to 4 fathoms. At the end of the century, 6-fathom staves formed a separate category. Cants (*Balkunen oder behauene Balcken*) were mainly grouped by their length, i.e., 3½, 4, 5, or 6 fathoms. In the port book of 1698, there are records differentiating between fir-wood deck balks (*gränen deckbalken*) and semi-balks (*gränen halbe balkunen*), which outnumbered cants by as much as one-third. Starting from 1671, the export from Pärnu was dominated by booms (*Spiren*), ranging from 7, 8, 9, and 10 fathoms, but also marked as semi (*halbe*) and full (*ganze*) booms; in addition there are some references to indicate that they were made of fir (*tanne, gränen*). In some single years there are references to winch-logs (*Hand Spicken*), which were exported as one-off batches in the years covered in the Table. Pumps (*Pumpen*) constitute a separate article in the export from Pärnu; these were probably pump pipes or water pipes as they were exported both in the bored and unbored (*ungebohrde*) form. In 1652, there was a note indicating that these were fathom-long pump

[21] EAA, f. 1, n. 2, s. 443, l. 324–325.
[22] EAA, f. 3287, n. 1, s. 291 (Jürgen Tunderfeldt's ledger of purchasing forest, 1688).
[23] Pāvulāne, *Rīgas tirdzniecība ar meža materiāliem XVII–XVIII gs.*, 30.
[24] A fathom as a unit of length corresponded to ca. 1.7–1.9 metres.

trees. A separate group in the timber export from Pärnu consists of aspen (*Espen*) and ash (*Eschen*) blocks (*Klötzer*) with a recorded length of 1½ or 3 fathoms, and firs (*Gränen*), which were not classified under logs, blocks, or booms (although in terms of length they are very close to booms), with lengths of either 8, 9, or 10 fathoms.

The timber range of Pärnu shows very clearly that aside from cants and pump lines there were no other processed timber products, not to mention large quantities of sawn timber like boards, scantlings, and the like. By way of comparison it should be noted that processed timber prevailed in the timber export from Narva. In addition to all kinds of sawn timber there were also window and door frames, as well as ship construction details, exported from Narva.[25] There were sawmills operating along the Narva River and in Ingria making products that could be exported.[26] Riga can also be characterized by a wide range of timber products,[27] although it cannot be compared to that of Narva. Bored pump lines were the speciality of Pärnu. It is quite likely that there were some sawmills operating also in the basin of the Pärnu River, which is proven by the fact that in 1684 there were 12 saw blades brought to Pärnu from Amsterdam, their owner being a local burgomaster Heinrich Schwerss. However, the output of the sawmills could not have been very large, and most of the sawn timber was probably used by local people. In addition, there were extensive fortification works carried out in Pärnu in the last third of the seventeenth century, which also required construction timber.[28]

There are data available on the export destinations of timber products from Pärnu only for 1652, 1684, and 1698. The records from 1652 indicate that all timber was carried out by eight Dutch ships. The remaining 28 ships (*Schiffe und Schuten*) that left the Port of Pärnu carried different sorts of grain, flax, hemp, etc. In 1684, Amsterdam was marked as the port of destination of exported timber on twelve occasions and Hindeloopen

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25 Soom, "Narva metsakaubandus ja metsatööstus", 59–63.

26 Enn Küng, "Manufaktuuriettevõtlusest ja veskitest Narva jõel 17. saj. II poolel", *Tuna*, 3 (2009), 12–33.

27 Pāvulāne, *Rīgas tirdzniecība ar meža materiāliem XVII–XVIII gs.*, 25–31, 44–49; Jarmo T. Kotilaine, "Riga's trade with its Muscovite hinterland in the seventeenth century", *Journal of Baltic Studies*, XXX (1999), 149–150; Jarmo T. Kotilaine, "The significance of Russian transit trade for the Swedish Eastern Baltic ports in the seventeenth century", *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*, 49 (2000), 563–564; Jarmo T. Kotilaine, *Russia's foreign trade and economic expansion in the seventeenth century: windows on the world* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005), 340–341.

28 Elsbeth Parek, *Pärnu sajandeis: ehituskunstiline ülevaade* (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1971), 25–28.

twice. According to the records of the customs book of 1698, most of the timber was sent to Amsterdam (on 24 occasions) and once to Hindeloopen, but 30 cants, 20 winch logs, 250 staves, and 4 square cords of firewood were sent to Lübeck,[29] and varied timber products, which had not found a buyer in Pärnu, went to Riga. So, notwithstanding the shortage of data, we can state that the Netherlands was the dominant destination of timber products from Pärnu. The same can be said about Riga and Narva, too. However, large quantities of timber were also taken from Narva to England, on single occasions also to Spain, Portugal, Lübeck, and elsewhere.[30] Differently from timber merchants in Riga, their colleagues in Pärnu and Narva were not obligated to supply the Admiralty Board in Stockholm with timber.[31]

There were some small quantities of timber imported to Pärnu as well, such as sawn timber, pitchers, and undefined timber articles (*holzwahren*). Thus there were 192 Swedish floorboards (*schwedische Dielen*) brought to Pärnu in 1670, and 804 and 2,052 planks (*Bretter*) in 1671 and 1676, respectively. As for the latter, there is a comment that 1,884 of these had already been cleared for customs in Kokkola (Finland), and in 1677 it was recorded that 2,784 planks had been also cleared in Kokkola. The import in 1683 consisted of 102 wooden pitchers, 235 plain boards cleared in Stockholm, as well as 24 plain boards and 12 double boards of unidentified origin and an unspecified quantity of timber goods. In 1684, there were 48 plain boards brought from Stockholm. In 1698, Pärnu received unspecified timber goods valued at 22.5 silver dalers from Hanko, Finland.

The economic and political significance of Pärnu to Sweden

When estimating the economic and political importance of Pärnu to the Swedish state as compared to other trading towns in the provinces of the Baltic Sea in the seventeenth century, it is quite obvious that – differently from Tallinn, Narva, Nyen, and Riga – on the state level there was no clear, systematic, and long-term trading policy for Pärnu. In the eyes of

[29] The Zulage customs registers from Lübeck from the last third of the 17th century also show that timber was exported from Pärnu only on two occasions: in 1672 there were 100 staves brought and in 1701 wood products for the price of 26 riksdalers (Archiv der Hansestadt Lübeck, 3.4-9 Zulageherren; Eingang von See).

[30] Soom, "Narva metsakaubandus ja metsatööstus XVII sajandi lõpul", 62–63.

[31] Pāvulāne, *Rīgas tirdzniecība ar meža materiāliem XVII–XVIII gs.*, 27–30; Vasiliĭ Doroshenko, *Torgovlya i kupechestvo Rigi v XVII veke* (Riga: Zinatne, 1985), 130.

the central authorities, the overseas provinces formed two large trading territories with two different sets of problems. First, the eastern part of the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Finland with the three towns oriented to transit trade from Russia, i.e., Tallinn, Narva and Nyen, where the most essential issue was to bring the Russian trade from Archangelsk back to the Baltic Sea and to coax the Russians and western Europeans to trade in these cities.[32] And second, the Riga-Daugava (Düna) waterway, which was used to export goods from Russia, Belarus, and Poland/Lithuania.[33] In addition to trading relations with Russia, Tallinn and Riga had close connections with the local market in Estonia and Livonia. Pärnu with its rather limited hinterland was influenced by both large trading areas.

If we compare the proceeds received by the Swedish Treasury from Estonian and Livonian towns in the form of port customs fees, Pärnu held the fourth place after Riga, Tallinn, and Narva. When in 1690 the state collected port customs fees in the amount of 30,881 riksdalers in Riga, 16,232 riksdalers in Tallinn, and 7,585 riksdalers in Narva, the respective sum in Pärnu amounted to 808 riksdalers.[34] However, one should take into account that the port customs fee for Riga and Pärnu was higher than in the towns along the coast of the Gulf of Finland. When in Tallinn and Narva (and in Nyen which was situated at the estuary of the Neva River), the port customs fee for transit goods was 1%; the respective rate in Pärnu and Riga was at least 2% of the value of the goods.[35] The customs fees received illustrate very clearly the volume of trade in Pärnu and its contribution to the economy of the Swedish state.

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[32] Soom, "Die Politik Schwedens bezüglich des Russischen Transithandels"; Stefan Troebst, *Handelskontrolle - "Derivation" - Eindämmung: schwedische Moskaupolitik 1617–1661* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997); Enn Küng, *Rootsi majanduspoliitika Narva kaubanduse küsimuses 17. sajandi teisel poolel* (Tartu: Eesti Ajalooarhiiv, 2001).

[33] Stefan Troebst, "Stockholm und Riga als "Handelsconcurrentinnen" Archangelsk? Zum merkantilen Hintergrund schwedischer Großmachtpolitik 1650–1700", *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte*, 48 (Berlin, 1993), 259–294.

[34] Helʻmut Piŭrimyaé, "Tendentsiya razvitiya i obëm torgovli pribaltiŭskikh gorodov v period shvedskogo gospodstva v XVII veke", *Skandinavskiĭ sbornik*, VIII (Tallinn, 1964), 106.

[35] Georg Jensch, *Der Handel Rigas im 17. Jahrhundert. Ein Beitrag zur livländischen Wirtschaftsgeschichte in schwedischer Zeit*, Mitteilungen aus der livländischen Geschichte, 24:2 (Riga: Kymmel, 1930), 115.

The rising interest of the Netherlands in the timber of the Baltic Sea in the mid-1680s

As mentioned above, timber trading in Pärnu started in the middle of the seventeenth century at the latest, and the main buyers of timber came from the Netherlands. In the mid-1680s however, timber trading in Pärnu caught the attention of the central authorities for a while, and the promotion of local timber export was discussed at the state level. The idea to trade timber in Pärnu originated from the Amsterdam trading circles. The merchants from the Netherlands were interested in Swedish timber due to the conflict of political and economic interests that had arisen between them and the Danish-Norwegian king in the early 1680s. Danish foreign trade depended largely on the Netherlands. For obvious reasons, both Denmark and Sweden tried to reduce the influence of the Dutch and establish their own merchant navy. Despite this, the Netherlands repeatedly supported Denmark either directly or indirectly in its fight against Sweden; the last occasion occurred in 1675 when the Netherlands and Denmark declared war against Sweden. As a counter measure, Sweden denied the Netherlands access to its ports. The peace treaty signed between Sweden and the Netherlands as late as 1679 put an end to this stressful period. Friendly relations between the two countries were ultimately established by the trade agreement signed in 1681 and renewed in 1686. Although the agreements were not favorable to Sweden due to strong competition pressure from the Netherlands, they still brought the Dutch back to Swedish ports and gave the Swedes an opportunity to visit the Netherlands with their vessels and goods. The 1686 agreement brought Sweden into the alliance of states against France.

The relationship between the Dutch and the Danes was at the same time deteriorating. In 1682 Denmark became an ally of France, who was the former ally of Sweden and the enemy of the Dutch. In 1683, there were counter-Dutch customs tariffs imposed in Denmark and the duties on the export of forestry products were raised in 1685. The years from 1683 to 1688 are characterized as the trade war period in the relations between Denmark and the Netherlands. The Dutch took their revenge on the Danes by suspending the import of timber, forestry products, and fish. The Danes held out for a while, but as timber was almost their only export resource, they had to give in. The customs tariffs of 1683 were annulled in the summer of 1688. The complicated relations between the two countries were settled around 1700. In the years when the Netherlands boycotted the import of timber, pitch, tar, and fish from Norway, opportunities were sought to buy

these goods from Sweden and its provinces,[36] although a longer sea voyage to the Baltic Sea raised the final price of freight and goods.[37]

The possible interest of the Dutch in Sweden's forests was first discussed by the Royal Board of Trade on 11 September 1684. In his letter to the Board, King Charles XI communicated the information he had received from Nils Gyldenstolpe, Sweden's Ambassador in the Netherlands, according to which the Dutch had informed him that their timber trade in Norway had ceased and they had investigated the possibilities for getting the timber from Sweden. The Board replied by letter to the King on 17 January 1685, suggesting the town of Uddevalla as a place for conducting trade with the Dutch. Udevalla's potential as a trading town was also discussed among other interested parties in Sweden.[38]

In February 1686, the matter of supplying the Dutch with timber was taken under in-depth discussion by the Board. On 18 December 1685, Charles XI had forwarded ambassador Gyldenstolpe's letter of December 5 to the Board. The Dutch had ensured the ambassador of several complications regarding timber sourcing from Denmark and Norway and expressed their willingness to conduct trade in Sweden. For the sake of extra information, Gyldenstolpe made a trip to Amsterdam where he met with local timber tradesmen. They later met the ambassador also in The Hague to find out what terms they would have to meet if they were to buy their timber from Sweden. The primary wish of the Dutch was to see the sea tolls reduced to 3%. Two tradesmen from Amsterdam – Laurentz Petterson and Caspar Herwegh – introduced their plan to build, under certain circumstances, two or more wind-powered sawmills in Pärnu or its proximity. To build the sawmills and store the timber, they wished to have a plot of land outside of Pärnu. Furthermore, they wanted their company to enjoy a monopolistic position for the next twelve years. The Dutch tradesmen

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[36] Georg Landberg, *Den svenska utrikespolitikens historia. 1648–1697*, I:3 (Stockholm, 1952), 213–239; Sven-Erik Åström, *From Stockholm to St. Petersburg: commercial factors in the political relations between England and Sweden 1675–1700,* Studia historica, 2 (Helsinki, 1962), 26–45; Jonathan I. Israel, *Dutch primacy in world trade 1585–1740* (Oxford: Clarendon press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 302–304; Lindblad, "Evidence of Dutch-Swedish trade in the 17th century", 217–218; Enn Küng, "Zwischen Mars und Merkur: Narvaer und Revaler Kaufleute im Handel mit den Niederlanden um 1675", *Die baltischen Länder und der Norden*, Festschrift für Helmut Piirimäe, ed. by Mati Laur, Enn Küng and Stig Örjan Ohlsson, Nordistica Tartuensia, 13 (Tartu: Akadeemiline Ajalooselts, 2005), 194–217.

[37] The preserved business letters of the merchants of Narva clearly indicate that the freight prices of the Norwegian and Baltic Sea ports were higher in the latter.

[38] RA, Kommerskollegium, huvudarkivet, kungliga brev och remisser, E.I.a., vol. 6 (Charles XI to the Board of Trade on 11 September 1684, 10 April, and 16 June 1685).

requested a level playing field with local citizens while purchasing timber from the hinterland of Pärnu, using no local intermediaries. The same applied to exporting timber and rates of duty. Moreover, the Dutch wanted to be taken under royal protection. A successful trading business in return promised to bring financial benefits to the Royal Treasury.[39]

According to the minutes of the Royal Board of Trade from 11 February 1686, the Dutch requests were met with a lukewarm response since their plan was believed to have a hidden agenda. When discussing the matter, it was strongly believed that Swedish forest reserves should remain for the local mining and shipbuilding industries. The aim of the Board was to have Swedes navigate the ships carrying timber and timber by-products to places where that timber could be traded in for commodities essential for the Swedish state, thereby keeping the revenues in the country and leaving foreigners empty-handed. No concessions were to be granted to foreigners, particularly to the Dutch, in Swedish ports. But this principle applied only to Sweden and not its provinces. As the President of the Board, Gustaf Lilliecrona, noted there were no valid reasons to prevent the Dutch from doing trade in Livonia, including in Pärnu.

When considering the candidature of Pärnu, which was proposed by Amsterdam tradesmen, it was soon agreed that timber trade by foreigners would not undermine the interests of any local tradesmen. In addition, Pärnu was not seen as competition for the timber trade of Riga and Narva. There is no evidence of a sawmill in Pärnu at that time, but the area surrounding the town was covered with thick forests that local people did not have the means or skills to process or export, and therefore they could only act as intermediaries to foreign merchants. Lack of financial means made it difficult for the people of Pärnu to build sawmills. The timber trade and industry in Riga and Narva was in the hands of local traders who had been granted various trade privileges, which explains why the Dutch were so keen on establishing their trade in Pärnu. The local traders in Pärnu did not have such privileges.[40] In their letter to Charles XI, the Board considered the possibility of granting some Dutch traders – who would take their business to Pärnu – privileges for ten years. During that time, the Dutch would have the right to export timber from Pärnu and establish sawmills on plots of land granted to them for building and timber-storing purposes.

[39] Nils Gyldenstolpe's views from the letter dated 5 December 1685 have been summarized in: RA, Kommerskollegium, huvudarkivet, registratur, B.I.a., vol. 25 (Board of Trade to Charles XI on 11 February 1686).

[40] RA, Kommerskollegium, huvudarkivet, protokoll, A.I.a.1, vol. 32 (11 February 1686).

It was also suggested that the Dutch would be allowed to buy timber for their sawmills directly from the hinterland. They had to follow the customs duties laid down for Livonia and the trade agreement between the Netherlands and Sweden.[41]

On 23 February 1686, Charles XI ordered Johan Stiernhöök, the Secretary of the Board of Trade, to examine whether there were sufficient reasons to cut timber duties to 2–3%, as had been requested by the Dutch, since the sea route to Sweden was longer and more time consuming than to Norway. Stiernhöök had to find out: first, where in Sweden the forest could be felled and exported without undermining state interests; second, what were the duty rates in those places and whether lower duty rates would bring additional trade; third, which type of wood and in what amounts could be exported and whether the export of some types of wood should be banned; fourth, if Swedish subjects should be given any privileges.

The King also noted the low duty rates already in place in Narva, but since the timber there was exported from Russia it was a matter of transit trade.[42] On the subject of Pärnu, the King had been informed of vast forests in the area that could easily be exported especially after dredging the Pärnu River. But since duty rates in Pärnu were often considered too high, the town was not attractive to foreign timber tradesmen, and valuable timber was left rotting in local forests. Thus Stiernhöök had to gather similar kind of information about Pärnu that the King had requested about the entire Swedish realm. However, the King also reminded him of the trade agreement between the Netherlands and Sweden under which the duty rates had to be the same for locals and the Dutch. This meant that if the rates were to be reduced, this had to apply to the Dutch as well. The only privilege that locals had was the right to directly deal with the hinterland of the town. Regarding the two tradesmen from Amsterdam and their plan to establish wind-powered sawmills in Pärnu, the King concluded that it would be better if the sawmills were built by Swedish subjects and if foreigners could only participate in the enterprise (if necessary). And if the export business was to succeed, the local tradesmen should realize that sawn timber was a profitable commodity.[43]

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41 RA, Kommerskollegium, huvudarkivet, registratur, B.I.a., vol. 25 (Royal Board of Trade to Charles XI on 11 February 1686).

42 Beginning in 1648, the duty on transit goods in Narva, Tallinn, and Nyen was 2%.

43 *Samling utaf Kongl. Bref, Stadgar och Förordningar etc. angående Sveriges Rikes Commerce, Politie och Oeconomie*, ed. by Anders Anton von Stiernman, IV (Stockholm, 1760), 653–656.

On 6 April 1687, the Board of Trade discussed the inquiry of the Dutch Parliament about the feasibility of establishing a timber trade in Sweden, including Pärnu. The Board decided that it was not possible to sell timber to foreigners from the Swedish provinces bordering the Baltic Sea. However Udevalla and Halmstad on the shores of the North Sea were perfect for the purpose since their hinterland was the thickly forested areas of Småland with no mining industry, which meant vast areas of unused forests. The Board also heard from Secretary Stiernhöök who reported on overseas provinces, particularly Livonia, that he had visited under the King's orders in 1686 in order to examine the possibilities for a timber trade there. Stiernhöök referred, by way of example, to the large-scale timber trade in Narva where tradesman Jacob Porteus had a mill with 16 saws producing several types of boards. Burgrave Jürgen Tunderfeldt even owned a number of sawmills with 40–50 shiploads of timber leaving the mills yearly. Stiernhöök's opinion, which was also acknowledged by the Board, was that opportunities for timber trade in Pärnu should first be provided to local tradesmen and only then to the Dutch. The Board also considered different possibilities for improving the general economic climate in the region. Among others, dredging the Pärnu River and making it navigable, as well as relocating the office of the economy governor of Livonia to Pärnu, were under consideration.[44]

Discussions continued on 7 April 1687. Now Nils Gyldenstolpe, Swedish ambassador to the Netherlands, stood in front of the Board claiming that according to his knowledge Pärnu did not have direct trading contacts with the Netherlands. And although Amsterdam tradesmen wanted to exploit the possibilities that timber trade presented, they were not interested in establishing manufactories in Sweden, including in Pärnu. In the matter of customs duties, the Vice President of the Board, Fabian Wrede, suggested using Narva and Nyen as an example and lowering the rates to 2%. Since those towns were mediators of Russian transit trade, their duty rates were kept low. According to the Vice President, the same rates could be applicable to Pärnu after dredging the riverbed and making it navigable up to Lake Peipus and Pskov, where Russian commodities could be purchased. On 14 April, the discussions continued with the main focus on the subject of dredging the waterway.[45]

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[44] RA, Kommerskollegium, huvudarkivet, protokoll, A.I.a.1, vol. 33 (6 April 1687).

[45] On dredging the Pärnu waterway, see: Enn Küng, "The plans for making the Pärnu-Viljandi-Tartu waterway navigable", *Ajalooline Ajakiri,* 3/4 (2009), 425–446.

The following ideas were outlined in the Board's letter to the King from 14 April. Timber trade should be subject to certain benefits, e.g., introduction of lower duty tariffs since Estonia, Livonia, and Ingria were further away from Western Europe than Norway. Benefits would have also helped the Dutch to settle in the region more easily. The Dutch were known to bring along convenience goods like salt on their journeys to Riga, Narva, or Pärnu. In Norway they were known for conducting their business in cash. In regard to Pärnu, the Board was still convinced that the Pärnu River had to be made navigable up to Lake Peipus, but they also believed that if Pärnu wanted to participate in a large-scale timber trade they should start cutting their logs into boards to make more profit. However, the harsh reality was that the lack of economic resources made it very difficult for them to establish sawmills themselves, and therefore the Dutch and other foreign traders could, under certain circumstances, do so themselves, and in return enjoy a few years free from competition. The sawmills of foreigners were considered better than no sawmills at all. Further information was to be obtained from the Governor-General of Livonia, Jacob Johann Hastfer.[46] In 1687 there was some additional correspondence between the King and the Board concerning the timber trade of the Netherlands, but Pärnu was mentioned only briefly.[47]

The issue of the timber trade was once again tabled in the Board on 9 and 11 June 1688. The discussion was based on the report by Governor-General Hastfer that Charles XI had forwarded to the Board on 26 May 1688. The Board documentation does not contain the report itself, but it was very likely Hastfer's letter to the King from 15 March. The Board's attention now turned to Riga, which had come to the forefront as a place for timber trade with the Netherlands. Riga was also supported by Hastfer. Pärnu in comparison to Riga was considered a secondary choice and came up only in the context of lowering the customs duties and other costs. The Board failed to agree on a number of questions, including whether to lower the licence duty in Riga and Pärnu and whether lower duties should concern all types of timber or only cheaper ones like pine. In reality the Board did not have an overview of the duty costs in Riga and Pärnu, claiming they could be as high as 12% of the value of goods. However, they were convinced that the costs (*Ungeld*) on ships that transported cheap timber should be

[46] RA, Kommerskollegium, huvudarkivet, registratur, B.I.a., vol. 26.

[47] RA, Kommerskollegium, huvudarkivet, kungliga brev och remisser, E.I.a., vol. 8 (See for example a letter from Charles XI to the Board of Trade from 1 July 1687).

reduced by half, as well as the tax on lighthouses that was believed to be disproportionally high, since the Dutch had complained about high costs.[48]

Hastfer's letter from 15 March contains several interesting details that reflect the trading environment in Pärnu. Namely, the Governor General claimed that people in Pärnu focused too much on brewing beer and were too poor to conduct trade on their own, therefore nothing in Pärnu could be done without foreign help. Hastfer suggested attracting rich tradesmen to Pärnu by offering them certain incentives. One of his proposals concerned lowering the licence duty to the level established in Riga and Tallinn or even lower. He also saw timber trade as a key factor in the future of Pärnu. And even though the region could not provide timber for spars, he believed the forests around Pärnu could offer adequate timber for shipbuilding, in which the Netherlands had shown interest. By 1687, the Dutch had exported 34 shiploads of timber from Pärnu. Hastfer also called upon dredging the Pärnu River since it would have made it possible to source goods from Tartu and Pskov. The river also provided easy access to forests in remote areas. Hastfer's additional suggestion was to export processed timber instead of raw logs. He had convinced the people of Pärnu to establish sawmills and even sent customs officer Johan Georg Müller to Narva to find a millwright and bring him to Pärnu.[49]

On 30 April, Hastfer once again took up the issue of timber trade in his correspondence to Charles XI, emphasizing its rewarding prospects for Riga and Pärnu. The Governor General urged Riga to set its sights on the East where the vast and unused timber market of Russia was waiting. Hastfer's preference of Russian timber to that from Livonia was based on the so-called principle of keeping the royal forests for the state's own needs. He also noted that in the spring of that year, thirty shiploads of timber had already been exported from Pärnu. In previous years that number of ships had passed through the port during the whole year.[50] In his next letter, dated 3 May, the Governor General focused on the timber trade in Riga, claiming that favorable economic conditions would allow the export of hundreds of shiploads of timber from Riga (in 1687 there had been 150 shipments). Hastfer confirmed again that Russia and Poland had

[48] RA, Kommerskollegium, huvudarkivet, protokoll, A.I.a.1, vol. 32 (9 June 1688). J. J. Hastfer to Charles XI on 15 March 1688 (RA, Livonica II, vol. 90).

[49] RA, Livonica II, vol. 90 (J. J. Hastfer to Charles XI on 15 March 1688).

[50] RA, Livonica II, vol. 90 (J. J. Hastfer to Charles XI on 30 April 1688). The letter was accompanied by Johan Georg Muller's overview of sawmills in Narva, done at Pärnu on 6 April 1688. Hastfer's letters from 15 March and 30 April 1688 have been referred to also by Soom: Soom, "Der ostbaltische Holzhandel", 98.

sufficient forest resources suitable for export that even future generations could benefit from. According to his plan, the Dutch were to conclude an export agreement with tradesmen from Riga for timber they sourced from Poland and Russia. In addition, sawmills had to be built on the rivers in Livonia in order to produce planks and boards that met the requirements of Dutch merchants since the export of sawn logs was easier and more beneficial. Hastfer insisted that if Sweden wanted to stay competitive against Norwegian timber prices and develop a timber trade, a system of incentives had to be introduced. He was particularly referring to high freight costs in Riga.[51] Hastfer returned to the subject of the timber trade in Riga in his letter from 14 May, where amongst other things he suggested the King lower customs duties. In the same letter, the Governor General insisted on good relations between the tradesmen of Riga and Polish subjects to ensure the smooth functioning of trade. Trade relations with Russia were marked by instability. Export to Sweden could have been stopped by the Russian Tsar at any time. To substantiate the above claim, Hastfer quoted a message from Jöran Sperling, Governor General of Ingria, according to which Russians were impeding timber export to Narva.[52]

On 18 June 1688, the King responded to Hastfer's letters from 30 April and 3 May, and very likely also to the letter from 14 May, focusing mainly on the topic of Riga, but briefly making a few comments about other trade towns in the provinces bordering the Baltic Sea. First, he expressed his support for the establishment of sawmills on the rivers and the consequent dredging work, followed by a recommendation for the tradesmen of Riga to inform their Dutch business partners of low prices and various incentives in Riga. New trade conditions were to be laid down in a trade agreement with the Dutch Parliament. Lowering customs duties on expensive timber or its products such as masts, oak, etc. was deemed unnecessary by the King because of the high market demand. However, licence tax on cheap timber was to remain unchanged in Riga as well.[53] Little trading was done with cheap timber, although it could be exported at low costs and it grew in abundance in Livonia as well as in territories behind the borders. In Riga, however, the expenses on the so-called cheaper timber could be cut down by a half, e.g., by not charging lighthouse fees (*Fyrbackspenningra*) on such timber. Another item of savings in the King's opinion was the

[51] EAA, f. 278, n. 1, s. IV:27A/5 (J. J. Hastfer to Charles XI on 3 May 1688).
[52] EAA, f. 278, n. 1, s. IV:27A/5 (J. J. Hastfer to Charles XI on 14 May 1688).
[53] On 11 June 1688, the Board had also suggested that the King not lower the licence duty (RA, Kommerskollegium, huvudarkivet, registratur, B.I.a., vol. 27).

taxes payable to Riga, which he advised against charging for cheap timber. In addition, the procedure of clearing and taxing imported goods was to be simplified.[54] Two weeks later, on 2 July, Hastfer communicated these royal orders to the merchants of Riga.[55]

As mentioned earlier, diplomatic and business relations between the Netherlands and Denmark had improved in the summer of 1688. The Dutch regained their right to source timber from Norway and their interest in entering the Baltic Sea region subsided. Information on the changing situation reached Livonia and Riga probably in June, as on 25 June Hastfer informed King Charles XI of the "positive" messages about restoring the timber trade in Norway on favorable conditions (*mit allen favorablen conditionen*) to the Dutch and asked the King to advise him whether Riga had any reason whatsoever to make deals with the foreigners, as there was no certainty as to whether the Dutch had changed their plans and would stick to the contracts they had signed.[56] In his answer of 20 July, the King advised that both the merchants of Pärnu and Riga should continue their timber trade. Namely, a certain ambassador of the Netherlands had confirmed that the Dutch had already become accustomed to timber trading in Livonia and wanted to continue with it. The King gave the Governor General an order to support timber trade in every possible way.[57]

Now, however, there was competition from Norway to be considered. In his letter of 2 July to Charles XI, Hastfer again counted the benefits granted by the King to the merchants of Riga, such as cutting the costs down by a half and waiving the lighthouse fee, which the merchants had warmly welcomed. But in addition they demanded that the licence duty on short masts (5–10 palms) be lowered. As far as Pärnu was concerned, Hastfer found that the items worth importing from there were booms (*Spyrer*) and other logs, as these were of high demand among foreigners, but if the licence duty was not lowered, it could happen that booms and other timber products would not sell. It was essential to keep the price level lower than in Norway.[58] On 11 August, Charles XI approved these ideas and allowed

[54] Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs [LVVA], 7349. f., 1. apr., 140. l. (Charles XI to J. J. Hastfer on 18 June 1688).
[55] EAA, f. 278, n. 1, s. IV:27B/2 (J. J. Hastfer to the Town Council and citizens of Riga on 2 July 1688).
[56] EAA, f. 278, n. 1, s. IV:27B/1 (J. J. Hastfer to Charles XI on 25 June 1688).
[57] LVVA, 7349. f., 1. apr., 140. l. (Charles XI to J. J. Hastfer on 20 July 1688). In the King's answer the date of Hastfer's letter is 21 June 1688.
[58] EAA, f. 278, n. 1, s. IV: 27B/2 (J. J. Hastfer to Charles XI on 2 July 1688).

the licence duty on 10-palm masts in Riga and on booms and other logs in Pärnu to be lowered.[59]

Alas, this was the end of the discussion. The hopes that the Dutch would come to Pärnu and stay there died. While the beginning of 1688 had been very promising with thirty Dutch ships arriving in Pärnu, the shipping traffic soon stopped. According to superintendent Erik Pistohlkors, Pärnu had not received any ships in the spring and summer of 1689. The timber collected in Pärnu remained unsold and the city was short of salt. By 7 June, only one ship from Lübeck had visited Pärnu. A week later seven vessels arrived from the Netherlands, in autumn another two ships from the same country and a ship from Lübeck arrived. However, these three ships carried grain.[60] The letters of the superintendent do not specify how much and which timber the seven Dutch ships took with them. It is obvious that the trading volume in Pärnu was low in 1689, but due to the unavailability of statistical data the severity of the situation cannot be assessed. This is also the case with the probably record-breaking volume and composition of timber in 1687 and 1688. The customs book of Pärnu of 1698 gives evidence of the large-scale timber trade again, although the reasons for such a rise cannot be found in the archives.

Conclusions

The archival sources used in this article do not provide an answer to the question of how the Netherlands viewed the timber trade in Pärnu, Riga, and other Swedish cities. At the same time it is obvious that they entered the Baltic Sea due to the loss of the Norwegian market. It is quite certain that the volume of timber imported from the Baltic Sea countries grew in the second half of the 1680s. The central authorities of Sweden tried to exploit deteriorating political and business relations between the Netherlands and Denmark in their own fiscal interests – hoping that if trade volumes grew, more duty fees would flow to the state treasury. The discussions initially held in Stockholm were moved to Riga during 1687 and 1688, as it was expected that Jacob Johann Hastfer, Governor General of the province, would come up with specific proposals on how to increase timber export.

[59] LVVA, 7349. f., 1. apr., 140. l. (Charles XI to J. J. Hastfer on 11 August 1688). In the King's answer the date of Hastfer's letter is 5 July 1688.

[60] LVVA, 7349, f., 1. apr, 140. l. (E. Pistohlkors to Commissioner Nicolaus Klinstenhielmi and Governor Erik Soop, Pärnu, 24 May, 7 and 14 June, 16 July, 13 September, and 1 October 1688).

Hastfer had high hopes for Riga, as its hinterland comprised the large forested areas of Russia and Poland and the merchants there were wealthy.

However, Pärnu was supposed to play some role in timber export too, notwithstanding the fact that the town was poor, its hinterland limited, and forested areas more modest. Hastfer's wish was to improve significantly the economic conditions in Pärnu and set up sawmills, along with the old plan of making the Pärnu River navigable through Viljandi and Tartu up to Lake Peipus and from there to Pskov. This was in order to bring Russian goods, including timber, to Pärnu. In 1688, Pärnu also attracted the attention of the central authorities as a potential location for reopening the University of Tartu. A prospering economy was supposed to facilitate the activities of the university. It should be stated, however, that all these projects relating to Pärnu, including the large-scale fortification works carried out in those years, were the focus of the central authorities. The minutes of the Pärnu Town Council reveal that the council itself was not actively involved in these matters. All these national projects were probably too grand for a poor town. Although the Council discussed the division of new property resulting from the expansion of the territory of the town, the matters of the timber trade were not under consideration. The town's relative indifference is reflected in the fact that the local licence manager was sent to investigate the benefits of sawmills in Narva by Governor General Hastfer and not by the Town Council.

Thus it can be concluded that the ideas expressed from 1686 to 1688 by the King, the Board of Trade, and Governor General of Livonia on how to activate the timber trade in Pärnu and Riga and attract foreign investors did not develop any further and subsided. The Dutch sought to achieve lower customs duties and a certain monopoly of the market by seizing the entire timber trade including the forests in the hinterland of Pärnu and exporting. In return, they promised to set up sawmills and a forest industry in Pärnu. The timber merchants of Riga were in a better economic position and thus the idea of giving a monopoly to the Dutch was inconceivable, but they readily consented to lowering the export duties so the final price of timber could compete with that of Norwegian timber. Lower customs duties in Pärnu and Riga were supposed to offset higher freight expenses.

In 1688, the Dutch once again had a chance to source timber from Norway, thereby losing interest in the remote ports of the Baltic Sea. In addition, Pärnu could not offer more expensive types of timber for masts. It appears that the Dutch did not establish any sawmills in Pärnu in the late 1680s, which is indicated by the fact that the records on timber products

exported from Pärnu in 1698 do not say anything about sawn timber. At the same time it should be stressed that the export of timber from Pärnu was overwhelmingly dominated by the Dutch, who bought their goods from the merchants of Pärnu. (Another matter is where the merchants of Pärnu obtained the money to buy timber and other commodities from the hinterland.) Likewise, the archival records do not shed light on the purely technical aspects of timber trade in Pärnu, i.e., where the timber was brought from, how it was transported to the port, how and on what terms the deals were made, what the asking and sales prices were, etc.

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Kokkuvõte: *Pärnu puidukaubandus 17. sajandi teisel poolel*

Artiklis vaadeldakse Pärnu puidukaubanduse koosseisu ja mahtu 17. sajandi teisel poolel ning analüüsitakse seda mõjutanud majanduslikke ja poliitilisi tegureid. Ülevaade tugineb linna kaubandust kokkuvõtvatele tolliaruannetele aastatest 1652, 1670, 1671, 1676 ja 1677; sadamaraamatutele aastatest 1683, 1684 ja 1698 ning Rootsi kuningliku kammer- ja kommertskolleegiumi protokollidele ja kirjavahetusele.

Pärnust hakati puitu välja vedama hiljemalt 17. sajandi keskpaigas. Esimesed statistilised andmed on aastast 1652. Järgneval poolsajandil mängis puit Pärnu suhteliselt piiratud sortimendiga ekspordis vilja, lina ja kanepi kõrval olulist osa. Pärnu puidu peamisteks ülesostjateks olid hollandlased. 1680. aastate keskel sattus Pärnu puidukaubandus lühikeseks ajaks keskvõimude tähelepanu alla ning sealse puidueksportdi küsimust arutati riiklikul tasandil, kusjuures mõte puitu Pärnust hankida pärines Amsterdami kaupmeestelt.

Madalmaade huvi Läänemere-äärsete linnade kaudu (Pärnu kõrval ka Riiast jm) metsamaterjali hankida tulenes nende senise peamise puiduga varustaja Norra turu ajutisest äralangemisest 1680. aastate algul. Rootsi keskvõimud püüdsid Madalmaade ja Taani halvenenud poliitilisi ja majandussuhteid oma riigi fiskaalsetes huvides ära kasutada, lootes, et kaubamahtude suurenedes laekub tollide näol riigikassasse rohkem

sissetulekuid. Seevastu hollandlaste soov oli saavutada tollide alandamine ja teatav monopoolne seisund ning haarata enda kätte puidukaubandus alates Pärnu tagamaa metsadest kuni väljaveoni. Selle nimel lubati Pärnus sisse seada saeveskeid ning rajada metsatööstus. Nii keskvõimud kui ka kaupmeeskond said aru, et puidu väljaveotolle tuli alandada, et lõpphind oleks konkurentsivõimeline Norra puiduga, samuti pidid madalamad tollid kompenseerima kõrgemaid prahikulusid. Kui 1688. aastal taastusid hollandlaste võimalused hankida metsamaterjali Norrast, nende huvi kaugemate Läänemere sadamate vastu vähenes. Pealegi ei suutnud Pärnu pakkuda kalleid puidusortimente, nagu mastid. Teadaolevalt ei seadnud madalmaalased 1680.–90. aastatel Pärnus sisse ühtki saeveskit, mida näitab ilmekalt saematerjali puudumine Pärnust välja veetud puidusortimendi hulgas.