

Fredrik Thomasson: Swedish Caribbean Colonial (Archival) Justice in Digital Times

SWEDISH CARIBBEAN COLONIALISM

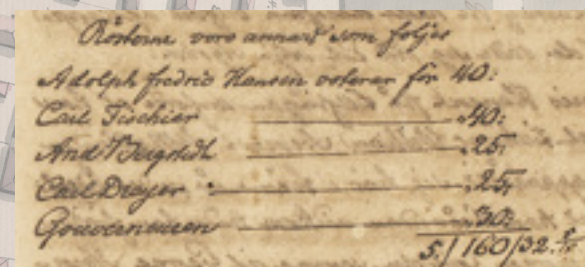
When Sweden took possession of the Antilles island Saint Barthélemy (aka St Barths) in 1785, it became a slaving nation. Swedish slavery was abolished in 1847 and the island was sold to France in 1878 after almost a century of Swedish presence in the Caribbean. Swedish colonialism is still not well known and not much researched. Especially Swedish slavery is uninvestigated, one of the reasons is that colonial misdeeds are hard to join with the Swedish self-image. (The 1796 map is of the island's capital Gustavia, around 1810 it had the same population as Uppsala, ca 5000 inhabitants.)

DIGITIZATION OF THE SAINT BARTHÉLEMY ARCHIVE

I am the initiator and project leader of the digitization of the Swedish governmental colonial archive (1785–1878) from Saint Barthélemy. When Sweden ceded the colony to France in 1878 the archives were left on the island. This archive (328 vols. / c. 40 metres > 300 000 pages) is now in the French colonial archives, *Archives nationales d'outre mer*, in Aix-en-Provence. The biggest series in *Le fonds suédois de Saint Barthélemy* (c. 115 volumes) contains the protocols and documentation from the island's court of law and covers the entire period from 1785 to 1878. The present project, *Swedish Caribbean Colonialism* (2019–23) inventorizes and orders the archive for the first time. It will also be made accessible on Uppsala University's repository Alvin.

SWEDISH SLAVE LAW

One part of the project concerns Swedish colonial legislation. The first comprehensive Swedish slave law was proclaimed June 30, 1787 and new slave laws were created constantly during the following decades. When Swedish Caribbean slavery was abolished in 1847 a corpus of slave law similar to that of the neighboring Danish and Dutch colonies existed. One of the projects outputs is a digital collection and database of these laws which opens up for comparisons to the surrounding colonies' legislation. Customary West Indian slave law had a large influence on Swedish legislation and judicial practice. There was a great deal of legal copying and cooperation between colonial powers in the Caribbean and this project component is also comparative.



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