

The Genesis of the Naval Profession, by **Norbert Elias**, edited by **René Moelker** and **Stephen Mennell**. Dublin, IE: University College Dublin Press, 2007. 172pp. \$84.95 cloth. ISBN: 9781904558804.

JAMES R. ZETKA, JR.

State University of New York, Albany

j.zetka@albany.edu

The Genesis of the Naval Profession consists of manuscripts from Elias's study of the English navy, a work that Elias himself never completed or published, aside from a 1950 article in the *British Journal of Sociology*. Editors from the University College Dublin Press have combined the original *BJS* article with Elias's unpublished typewritten manuscripts to produce a book. There is both good and bad to this enterprise. So, let's start with the bad. There is not really a book-length manuscript here. The book starts with chapter 1 on page 27 and, for the most part, ends with chapter 4, on page 112. The editors' introduction is thorough, but mostly summarizes Elias's arguments. The latter chapters are placed under the heading, "FRAGMENTS," a term that aptly describes them. While Elias's grasp of European history is extraordinary, he does not provide as much historical documentation of his arguments as he might. And, it is difficult to say whether Elias himself would have approved of this publication.

Now, for the good: *The Genesis of the Naval Profession* is a fascinating account of the development of the English naval profession that illustrates the importance of status-based conflict and negotiation. The naval officer role that emerged in England combined the skills of both military commanders and mariner seamen. Prior to this, different social classes inhabited each role: military officers were recruited from the "gentlemen" nobility; seamen were recruited from commoners and attained rank and command only after extensive apprenticeship training and experience. Elias's central questions concern how such different social roles could be fused into a single occupation. How could gentlemen, whose core values denigrated manual work and experiential expertise, come to value an occupational position demanding manual skill? In answering this question, Elias rivets our attention to a type of status-based con-

flict that may be critical to the development of modern professions and institutions.

For Elias, developments in maritime warfare forced a closer collaboration between mariner seamen and military gentlemen. Spatial and social distances broke down as leaders from both groups were forced to work, live, and eat together on ships. This produced status conflict. Who had the right to command whom? How were the spoils of war and privateering to be divided? Whose standards of conduct, fair play, and honor were to prevail? While conflict over such questions was nipped in the bud in France and Spain by an order imposed by the crown, in England, this was not the case. Individuals from both classes attained rank and command in the English navy prior to the eighteenth century—neither class could completely dominate, and constant struggle persisted. This tension received dramatic enactment in what Elias refers to as “the formative conflict” between Francis Drake and Thomas Doughty during Drake’s famous journey around the world in 1577–1578. Here, the conflict between the leaders from these social classes was vicious, turning friends into enemies, ending in the execution of the leading gentleman, Doughty, by Drake’s men after they tried him for mutiny.

This status conflict raged on until an institutional resolution was worked out in the eighteenth century. Then, the apprenticeship system changed, and boys from the privileged class were separated out from the commoners in training and given special title and rank. This enabled them to experience real apprenticeship training and to improve their nautical skills without status degradation, and this, in turn, made it possible eventually to replace the master seamen. So, the English gentlemen in the navy won out over the craftsmen, but only by appropriating their skills and orientations. This, according to Elias, did not occur in either France or Spain, where the conflict between military gentlemen and mariner seamen was never allowed to fester.

For Elias, the relationship between crown and the nobility in English society greatly influenced the development of its navy. The seaman gained stronger positions under Henry VIII, Elizabeth, and the Commonwealth. The military gentlemen gained stronger influence under Charles II and under James II.

Each ruler favored one group over the other for political purposes. Henry VIII, for example, to minimize the nobility's influence and power, frequently recruited men with exceptional skill from inferior social status. Henry favored the seamen for this reason, but he also took advantage of their skills in introducing effective innovations in naval warfare.

Elias's emphasis on the importance of status conflict in understanding the development of societal institutions is an important contribution that should not be ignored. *The Genesis of the Naval Profession* should be of great interest to scholars in military sociology, occupations and professions, and stratification. I found the book to be short, but fascinating.