

The Circulation of Global Maritime and Geographical Knowledge in Early Modern Europe [RL-CMK]

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The European maritime expansion was, in the *longue durée* of the Early Modern period, a complex phenomenon that impacted not only Europe, but the whole world. While this impact is widely known, few studies have been dedicated to the importance of intra-European geographical knowledge exchanges between maritime rivals. Still, it is impossible to approach, for instance, the onset of the English or the Dutch maritime expansion in the sixteenth century and its later developments, without considering these knowledge exchanges and maritime connections with other maritime players such as Portugal, Spain or France. After all, these critical knowledge exchanges played a decisive role by fuelling, on key-specific moments, the wider phenomena of the European maritime expansion in the Early Modern period.

This research line focuses on the circulation of maritime and geographical knowledge and information among maritime rivals, mainly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Within the umbrella of maritime and geographical knowledge, we frame all the knowledge that was required to undertake successfully, and in a systematic way, long-distance oceanic voyages. We are particularly interested in long-distance voyages that enabled the creation of connections in a systematic way, becoming the basis for the foundation of worldwide maritime empires. The knowledge we investigate is typically embodied in documents such as nautical rutters, nautical cartography or in important scientific treatises on navigation and geography of newly discovered places. Additionally, this knowledge was also based on the lived experience of pilots and other nautical personnel being “imported” into a certain place and bringing with them their tacit or artisanal knowledge of the sea.

The focus is placed on the exchanges of knowledge between the Iberian powers (Portugal and Spain) and their maritime rivals (France, England and the Dutch Republic) because it was the Portuguese and the Spanish in the fifteenth century who initiated the major process of European maritime expansion, to be followed eventu-

ally by other European maritime players in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, this does not mean that our approach is limited to European headquarters. Critical geographical and maritime knowledge exchanges took place in different regions such as Asia, Africa and the Americas, and very often the sea itself was the global place of encounter, confrontation, and a privileged place for these exchanges to take place. Therefore, the globality of these exchanges on a world scale is also taken into account.

By studying important case-studies that bring to light these knowledge exchanges between the Iberian Peninsula and the Northern European maritime powers, this research line documents processes of information and knowledge circulation. The chief concern is firstly to understand the conditions that favoured the carriers of this type of knowledge in their circulation to their home countries. Secondly, we approach the impacts that this knowledge exchanges had on the rise of French, English and Dutch maritime expansions, particularly by documenting the importance they had by the earlier stages of the Northern European's maritime expansion.

As maritime knowledge became, during the sixteenth century, the kind of knowledge that any power interested in creating long-distance connections and empires was interested in acquiring, our research is also linked to the wider debate on Globalization, particularly concerning the Early Modern period. Thus, our aim is also to understand how this maritime and geographical knowledge about the Earth was becoming truly global and why almost every power, although for different reasons ranging from the political to scientific motivations, was interested in acquiring in it.

Thus, in this history-of-knowledge approach that attempts to follow Peter Burke and Kapil Raj, we study in depth case-studies from classical cases of go-betweens, cultural mediators and brokers of knowledge that also link with more general problems entailing the circulation of information and decision making, particularly as they were approached by Arndt Brendecke. Within this purpose, our characters, as carriers of knowledge, range from merchants to ambassadors and all-too-familiar spies. Characters like Jan Huygen van Linschoten, who started as a curious traveller and ended up publishing an important work leading to the Globalization of nautical knowledge, or ambassadors, such as the French humanist Jean Nicot or the Portuguese ambassador to France João Pereira Dantas, who fought against each other's interests in the acquisition of maritime and scientific knowledge from the adversary. But they can also include outright spies and ambassadors, such as the Portuguese ones dispatched to England under Queen Mary I, sent on specific missions to sabotage the departure of the maritime rival's expeditions, to bribe Admirals or to convince pilots to return to their home countries.

In all these studies on the specifics of Dutch-Iberian, as well as of Anglo-Iberian and Franco-Iberian maritime and scientific relations, we attempt to show the intens-

ity and fluidity pattern of the circulation of this kind of knowledge. Despite the Iberian Crowns' attempts at enacting secrecy policies to prevent their maritime rivals from acquiring oceanic knowledge, our research demonstrates how such attempts, even when implemented, were always destined to fail. By studying the networks and flows of information, this research line argues on the impossibility to control the circulation of important maritime knowledge to the strategic maritime rival, starting already in the sixteenth century, as a major consequence of the maritime acceleration brought about by the Age of Discoveries.

Overall, our research line attempts to draw attention to the fact that these maritime and geographical knowledge exchanges increased dramatically in the sixteenth century as a consequence of the establishment of the first long oceanic connections on an planetary scale. Attached to this problematic, was also that of an emergence of global concepts about the Earth that decisively explain the later globalization of science and knowledge, impacting the European cultural and scientific environment from the Scientific Revolution to the Enlightenment and until our days.



The RUTTER project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 833438).

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