

**S. 10. 3. – COMMODITY CHAINS AND THE DEVELOPMENT
OF EARLY MODERN PORTS**

Chair: Cátia Antunes
(Leiden University)

Discussant: Tamira Combrink
(Leiden University)

Panel Abstract

The principle of commodity chains dictated terms of trade, political economy and maritime developments during the globalization wave that characterize European maritime expansion overseas after 1415, and more intensely after 1500. Even if the research in commodity chains is turning out to be a generous field of research with the publication of the Oxford History of Commodity Chains expected in 2021, historians have yet to lay the link between the development of commodity chains and the impact of such dynamism on ports worldwide and vice-versa. Particularly in a period when colonial exchanges were structured around- and for commodity chains, in an attempt to if not integrate, at least bring closer production outlets and consumption markets, ports became essential bolts in the development, maintenance and transformation of global commodity chains. This panel will look at how different commodity chains influenced the development of ports and how ports adapted and transformed flows and circulations of commodity chains, with specific focus on Amsterdam, Canton, Seville, Cartagena de las Indias and Luanda.

Keywords

Commodity Chains, Ports, Asia, Africa, Europe

Fueling the machine: The role of Iberian slaving ports for the integration of South Atlantic commodity chains (16th-17th centuries)

MIGUEL RODRIGUES (European University Institute)

Abstract

This paper seeks to explore how the commercial integration between Spanish American and Luso-African ports supported the development of slavery-based commodity chains in the South Atlantic, and how the slave trade contributed for expansion of Iberian colonial outposts on opposite sides of the Atlantic in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. While the advent of plantation economies and the connections between the North Atlantic and Brazil with West Africa have been broadly explored by the Atlantic scholarship, the presence and economic impact of African slaves in Latin American ports has received far less attention. Recent research on transatlantic slave ventures however, has showed that during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the shipment of African slaves to the territories of Spanish America not only rivalled, but in fact surpassed the trade to Brazil (Bryant 2014; Borucki, Eltis, Wheat, 2015).

Slave-based commodity chains were far from limited to Brazil's sugar production in the Iberian Atlantic. Slavery sustained several production chains across Spanish America, which in turn invigorated the economic activity and life at its ports. The transformation of the port of Cartagena into the biggest commercial center and slaving station in the South Atlantic was a direct result of the integration of the Portuguese and Spanish colonies through slave trading ventures. This inter-relationship would in turn, help finance and transform the Portuguese's own colonial ports in Africa, particularly Luanda, due to the growing investments in slavery-based commodity chains. This paper will shed some light in the role of trans-imperial commercial ventures between south Atlantic Iberian slaving ports. By focusing not only in Luanda and Cartagena, it will explore how slavery and slave-based chains and respective agents impacted and transformed the port cities in the South Atlantic.

Biography

Miguel Rodrigues is a PhD candidate at the European University Institute in Florence and is expected to graduate in October 2019 with a PhD dissertation that encompasses the trade in enslaved Africans from the Angolan and Loango Coasts onto Latin America.

Bargaining for grain and timber: how Seville's trade with Northern Europe expanded during the Eighty Years' war

GERMAN JIMENEZ MONTES (University of Groningen)

Abstract

This research studies how Seville's trade with Northern Europe expanded in the context of the Eighty Years' war, despite Spain's commercial war against the Dutch Republic, allowing the city to ensure access to strategic Baltic commodities, such as grain and timber for ship-building. The paper first studies Seville's capacity to influence the Habsburg policy-making on international trade through the negotiation of the city's fiscal contribution to the Royal Treasury. Secondly, it analyzes how Seville consolidated a market of Baltic commodities by collaborating with a group of Dutch and Flemish migrants to whom the city outsourced the taxation of sales of imported timber and grain. Thirdly, it explores how the rising demand for grain and timber in Andalusia led to an unprecedented growth in shipping between Andalusia and the Baltic ports, and to foreigners' increasing investment in the extraction of Western Andalusian salt

Biography

German Jimenez Montes is a PhD candidate at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands. His dissertation is part of the FP7 Program For Sea Discovery Research Group and his supervision falls under the responsibility of Dr. Jan Willem Veluwenkamp.

Canton and the impact of long-distance commodity-chains on its port, its hinterland and the wider Southeast Asian economy (1700-1800)

CHRIS NIERSTRASZ (Erasmus University Amsterdam)

Abstract

The port-city of Canton has mainly been studied from the perspective of western long-distance trade. Historians have especially focused on how western traders dealt with the Chinese authorities and local merchants. In such stories, it is often taken for granted that China supplied whatever foreigners wanted. At best, it remains unexplained more often than not how China changed to meet the exigencies the new demands of long-distance trade. This presentation wants to break beyond these boundaries by linking new archival research on long-distance commodity chains to developments in Canton. What impact did this trade have on Canton itself and on its Chinese hinterlands? What do the exports of tea tell us about transformation in the production process of Chinese commodities? And what does intra-Asian trade from south-east Asia to Canton tell us about changing consumption and production patterns in Canton and its hinterlands?

Biography

Chris Nierstrasz is Assistant Professor at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam. He has published extensively on the history of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and how the company influenced flows and circulations of commodity chains in Asia and globally.