

**S. 12. 1. – EUROPEAN SHIPBUILDING AND SHIP REPAIRS OVERSEAS:
CASE OF GREATER ASIA (PART 2)**
Chair: Catia Antunes
Discussant: Matthias van Rossum

Panel Abstract

European countries used their overseas settlements for shipbuilding and ship repairs during the Early Modern period, a phenomenon that has deserved little attention by current historiography. This lack of interest is particularly strange as European shipbuilding and ship repairs overseas were particularly important for the development and maintenance of the European presence overseas. However, it carried further, deeper and longer term implications for Europeans and non-Europeans alike. Shipbuilding and ship repairs overseas imposed a great demand on local natural resources (timber, tar, and pitch, iron for nails), manufactured goods (sails, furniture), specialized and general labour. Shipyards, dockyards, harbours and wharfs were spaces where European, African, 'American' and Asian knowledge and know-how were used, exchanged and adapted to meet diverse demands and circumstances. This panel (part of a twin-panel proposal) looks into the of overseas shipbuilding and repairs having the case of greater Asia at heart, whilst the twin panel will look at the theoretical proposals and implications of this debate and at the African and Pacific cases.

Keywords

Shipbuilding, Ship Repairs, Overseas, Asia

Shiprepair and Short-sea shipbuilding in ‘Dutch Asia’, a strategic asset of the VOC?

ERIK ODEGARD (Erasmus University Rotterdam)

Abstract

Although the Dutch East India Company (VOC) built or purchased a number of ocean-going ships in Asia, the vast majority of its large Indiamen were built at its own yards in the Netherlands. This was different for the legion small vessels which facilitated ship-to-shore transfer of people and products, and which connected smaller outpost to regional company headquarters. This paper will therefore examine the many smaller yards where the company built its lighters and coastal craft. Additionally, these facilities provided repair facilities and craftsmen for the repair and maintenance of the larger Indiamen when necessary. The paper argues that the dispersed network of facilities provided the company with crucial flexibility in the organization of its Asian shipping. But how did these facilities organize labor? Did they local products or European imports and to what extent did VOC firemen reflect on the various merits of Asian and European shipbuilding traditions? The paper will examine evidence from the VOC facilities at Kharg in Persia; Cochin, Negapatnam and Chinsurah in India; Colombo, Galle and Trincomalee in Sri Lanka as well as Malacca and Batavia. This broad approach, will allow me not only to study the interaction of European and Asian shipbuilding traditions, but also variations in the use of local ship types by the VOC. In addition, this approach allows for an appreciation of the geographic scale of the network, which I hypothesize was a key asset for the VOC.

Biography

Erik Odegard is assistant professor at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam. He is a PhD graduate at Leiden University and his research focuses on the management and cross-familial networks in the construction of the Dutch Empire. He has also been a fellow of the Maritime Museum in Amsterdam and the Head of Research at the Mauritshuis (museum for the study of Count Johan Maurits of Nassau Siegen, governor of Dutch Brazil)

Maritime Trade in the Persianate World

EDMOND SMITH (University of Manchester)

Abstract

In the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, opportunities stemming from increasing global, maritime trade presented the Safavid and Mughal empires with a dilemma – how could they best take advantage without weakening their ambitions in the Eurasian interior. In this paper, three approaches undertaken by rulers within the Persianate world will be considered. First, possibilities for direct, state-backed naval development. Second, regulatory frameworks to attract maritime trade. Third, the employment of European maritime actors. Drawing on little-used Persian material as well as records from English and Portuguese archives, this paper will show how maritime trade was understood in the Persianate world, and question traditional interpretations of these imperial polities as uninterested, misunderstanding, or oblivious to the changing commercial world around them.

Biography

Edmond Smith is lecturer at the University of Manchester. His current work investigates the concept of commercial culture in the Early Modern world.

Shipbuilding overseas as means of empire building. Labor relations and transference of knowledge in the Portuguese State of India shipyards (1500-1600)

AMÉLIA POLÓNIA/[▲]LILIANA OLIVEIRA (CITCEM - University of Porto)

Abstract

Shipbuilding always was an essential element of creating overseas empires. It requires raw material supply, technology, and manpower. With Portugal expanding overseas, building and repairing ships in the various Portuguese possessions became crucial. Initially, it was viewed critically by the metropolitan authorities, as they feared a loss of control. Soon, however, logistical needs and crown and private enterprise combined to provide shipbuilding facilities overseas. Shipyards in India, particularly in Goa and Cochin, were developed to meet the challenges and needs of a formal and informal “empire”. The Ribeira de Goa replicated first the Ribeira das Naus of Lisbon, but soon individual shipyards took over specific functions. Crown control, initially tight and systematic, proved difficult to maintain.

Indian woods were known for their hardness and durability and were shipped to Europe to build ships for the Indian Route. Experts labour mobility from Portugal to overseas possessions was soon followed by that across the Indian and Pacific oceans, with local experts joining Portuguese shipbuilders. The scope of the operation also required the recruitment of local shipbuilders. In general, and for its financial resources, industry soon relied on a cooperation of state and private initiative, much as at home. Balances between local inputs and Portuguese shipbuilding standards are open to debate. Discussion on the levels of transference of knowledge and the social and environmental impacts of such endeavours are state of the art topics. This paper will provide some inputs to these ongoing debates.

Biography

Amélia Polonia, Associate Professor, U. Porto, vice-president of the International Maritime History Association and director of the Transdisciplinary Research Centre Culture, Space, Memory. She co-edited *Beyond Empires. Global, Self-Organizing, Cross-Imperial Networks, 1500-1800* (2016), *Seaports in the First Global Age: Portuguese agents, networks and interactions (1500-1800)* (2016); *Connecting Worlds. Production and Circulation of knowledge in the First Global Age* (2018) and authored *The environmental impacts of the historical uses of the seas in the First Global Age* (2014) and *Brokers and Go-betweenes within the Portuguese State of India (1500 - 1700)* (2016).

Liliana Oliveira is a member of CITCEM and a PhD student in History at FLUP, where she is currently developing the project *Logistics and Empire Building. Shipbuilding in the*

Portuguese State of India (1500-1640). In 2016, she was awarded the Honourable Mention of the Almirante Teixeira da Mota Award by the Portuguese Navy Academy.