

S. 5. 4. – COLONIAL SYSTEMS AND SLAVE ROUTES - FROM EARLY MODERN TO
MODERN TIMES

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The African atlantic slaving ports (1450-1850): an attempt of definition

GUY SAUPIN (CRHIA-Université de Nantes)

Abstract

The historical research about slaving trade usually uses the term of atlantic slaving port in the period of zenith in the eighteenth and beginning of nineteenth century. What difference with the Portuguese “rios dos escravos” in the first century of expansion? As interface land-sea in charge of load and unloading and warehouse for exports (slaves, gold, ivory, gum, spices, hides, wax, supplies...) and imports (textiles, metallic tools, weapons, spirits, tobacco, decorative goods...), the new port of black Africa can be defined through three complementary approaches.

A material entrance includes the natural site, the required equipments, the constructive types and the effects of first urbanisation. A social entrance is interested in the actors' diversity and their agency (Africans, Europeans, Americans, Euroafricans, Afroamericans) in their social position and into an ethnic and cultural hybridity. A politic perspective characterizes the port policy and the control of terms of exchange into the institutional variety of polities and the insertion in an ancient urban African network.

All in all, it is necessary to define the structural specificities of an African urban harbour in atlantic hybridity, hub of globalisation, in a differentiated typology.

Key Words

Slaving port, Black African harbour, Atlantic hybridity, African port agency

Biography

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The Seaborne Europeans: Encounters in the West African Coast during the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries

FERNANDO MOUTA (FLUP-CITCEM)

Abstract

During the first years of expansion along the west African coast south of Cape Bojador, Portuguese men-at-arms attacked and kidnaped locals hoping to profit from selling them as slaves or through ransoms. It was the expected after centuries of fighting the Islamic civilization in the Iberian Peninsula. This strategy worked until the Portuguese suffered the first military defeats by the poisoned arrows of warriors in the river Senegal. The deaths of well-known servants of Prince Henry, the Navigator, was a shock to the Portuguese crusader mentality. But the human mind is well-equipped to overcome reality crashes. It didn't take long for the Portuguese to adapt and refocus their expansionist efforts into establishing commercial relations with the newly encountered leaders and communities. Trade would be the new language of enduring peace, as soon as the difficulties of the first contacts, especially in communication, could be overcome. Religious conversions and peace agreements (embodied in the construction of castles and factories) would follow, but only if these initial endeavors proved profitable. The establishment of commercial, diplomatic and cultural relations in the West African coast enabled a renewed centrality to a peripheral region. Using published and well-known sources for the centuries under scrutiny, they are studied in an entirely new way. We start by identifying any interaction between Africans and Europeans. Then, the agents involved, the type of interaction, the place where this happened, and the possible relationship between the parties involved are recorded. This myriad of possible encounters is simplified into a typology of interactions. Finally, this typology allows us to present models of interaction that intend to portrait the arrival of the seaborne Europeans and how Africans received these newcomers. This encounter of civilizations, only made possible by the new sea routes travelled by European ships, is the focus of this presentation.

Keywords

West African Coast; Commerce; Cooperation; Conflict

Biography

Fernando Mouta was born in Luanda, Angola, on November 2, 1974, but always lived in Porto, Portugal. He holds a degree in Marketing and Advertising and graduated in History by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto (FLUP) in 2015. He holds a master's degree in Medieval Studies since 2017, a specialization in African Studies since 2018, and

completed a PhD course in 2019, all from the same institution. He is currently enrolled in the PhD program at the University of Porto under the thesis entitled “Commerce, cooperation and conflict in the West African coast (fifteenth and sixteenth centuries). Beyond the transatlantic slave trade”. He is a researcher of CITCEM since June 2017 and has been awarded a scholarship from the Portuguese Foundation of Science and Technology (FCT) to complete his PhD research project.

The configuration of the maritime colonial state: port system evolution in the French West Africa (1895-1960)

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Abstract

The construction and consolidation of the colonial state in West Africa was fostered by the expansion of seaports which articulated the extraverted economic systems (Debrie, 2010; Castillo and Ducruet, 2018; Young, 1994). However, it was a progressive process where planning of infrastructures was accompanied by institutional reform, military issues and the important pressure exerted by the entrepreneurial imperial lobby. This paper deals with an analysis of port system evolution in the French West Africa from its constitution up to its dissolution. We build on quantitative individual port data we contrast with connectivity indicators (Lloyd Index) in order to evaluate how the maritime networks and concentration and dispersion trends evolved, attending to institutional and historical endowments. We also investigate the cumulative effects of port concentration in major seaports and the way how the regional economic structure gravitates around them. This paper forms part of the research grant: Empirical Studies on Structure and Evolution of Maritime Networks (18KK0051) funded by the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science.

Keywords

Port Systems, French West Africa, Institutions, Clustering, Colonialism

Biography

Daniel Castillo Hidalgo is Assistant Professor on Economic History at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. He broadly published on maritime and economic issues in Senegal and West Africa during the contemporary period. His research interests focus on the development of port communities in Senegal as well as the spatial evolution of port systems in the African continent in the long run. He is co-editor with Ayodeji Olukoju of African Seaports and Maritime Economics in Historical Perspective (May-June 2020, Palgrave).

César Ducruet is geographer and Research Director for the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) at the research laboratory UMR 8504 Géographie-Cités (Sorbonne University). His research interests include network analysis, urban & regional development, and spatial analysis, through the looking glass of ports and shipping networks, with a special focus on Europe and Asia. He is currently Principal Investigator of the EU-funded ERC Start-

ing Grant “World Seastems” (2013-2019) research project analysing the evolution of global shipping networks since the late nineteenth century, and published two edited books on Maritime Networks (2015) and Shipping Data Analysis (2017) in the Routledge Studies in Transport Analysis. He has published more than 50 articles in peer-reviewed journals and 30 book chapters in the last 15 years or so.