

S. 12. 4. – 18TH-CENTURY SHIPBUILDING AND ITS POLITICS
Chair: Ana Rita Trindade
(CSIC)

International relations in 18th century naval shipbuilding

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Abstract

Europe in the 18th century was the very definition of political instability. Numerous wars fought, alliances forged, then broken: a general tension that caused all nations to be on their toes. Also in the shipbuilding trade the tension was felt, and not only in terms of the quantity of ships built, but also the quality: the need to defend territories and the fear of being out-matched by the enemy created an arms race that shaped the European naval shipbuilding.

In a competitive situation like the political relations between European nations in the 18th century, historians tend to take a national perspective, and study each nation in isolation. The political system, the administration, the economy, the social circumstances, etc., all studied in order to assess the strength of each nation in the competition.

This paper would like to take a different approach:

The conflictive situation in 18th century Europe and the subsequent arms race created international relations, some open, some clandestine, but relations that has been slightly forgotten as they fit poorly into the notion of nations against nations, national pride and loyalty, and especially in naval history, where the navy is the very symbol of the nation.

However, the naval shipbuilding trade was one of the more important areas for international relations. While the ships were the technological most advanced machines in the preindustrial era, they were designed and constructed based highly on old traditions and a trial and error approach that was costly and where failure and success was hard to explain. If something worked, it was copied, and this was not only within the national borders. The British captured and copied French prizes, the French conducted industrial espionage in Britain. Furthermore, the Scandinavian navies enjoying long periods of peace were also browsing the market for shipbuilding knowledge; Sweden hiring English shipbuilders, and Denmark taking the prize for being the most active.

Keywords

Naval history, shipbuilding, International Relations, maritime archaeology, technology transfer

Biography

Ida Christine Jorgensen, born 1989 in Denmark, MA in history from University of Copenhagen (2014), MA in maritime archaeology from University of Southern Denmark (2016), ph.d.-bursary student at University of Portsmouth (2018-2021). General interest in naval history, shipbuilding, international relations, technological history, 18th century Europe, 18th century

colonies. Previous conference presentations include International Symposium of Boat and Ship Archaeology (ISBSA), 2018, British Commission for Maritime History's New Researchers Conference and International Colloquium of the Governance of the Atlantic Ports' conference in 2019.

The Spanish Navy and the management of timber supply for shipbuilding: the case of Cadiz in the Early Bourbon period (1717-1759)

ANA RITA TRINDADE (Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas)

Abstract

The reorganization of the Spanish Navy, as part of the early Bourbon Reforms undertaken in the first half of the 18th century, included a broad plan of war fleet increase, based on the revitalization of the national shipbuilding industry. In this context, the constitution of an effective timber supply network became a strategical action, which combined the direct state control with the contract system (the Asientos). Based on the analysis of vast quantitative and qualitative data from the Spanish Archives, this presentation focuses on the case of the Maritime Department of Cadiz and on how the Spanish Navy managed the timber supply from different origins, according to the specific needs of each ship element used in the construction and repair of war vessels in the Arsenal of La Carraca and the shipyard of Puntales. In a protectionist logic oriented to the cost reduction, the Navy prioritized the consumption of Andalusian forest resources, a truly regional system of timber supply, which articulated woodlands, roads, waterways, river and maritime shipping hubs and shipyards. These were mostly used in the crafting of the hull structure and planking and were combined with smaller amounts of material brought from the Northern regions of the peninsula. The privileged access to the highly resistant species of tropical timber from the colonial territories of the Caribbean region originated a frequent traffic through the fleets of the Carrera de Indias. Under the control of the contractors, the Baltic trade played an important role in this system, since it was the source of vital elements such as masts, spars and the mass-produced planks. More than a so-called “floating forest”, each of these vessels was the reflection of the economic, political and administrative strategies of the Spanish Empire.

Biography

Ana Rita Trindade is an archaeologist and is currently preparing her PhD. dissertation in History about the same subject of this presentation in the Pablo de Olavide University, Seville, Spain. This research was also the result of her participation in the Marie Curie Actions Initial Training Network project ForSEADiscovery - “Forest resources for Iberian Empires: Ecology and Globalization in the Age of Discovery” (grant agreement no. PITN-2013-607545-GA-607545), hosted by the History Institute of the Centre for Human and Social Sciences, Spanish National Research Council - CSIC, from 2014 to 2017.

William and Francis Warden, Master Shipwright's at Lisbon's Royal Shipyard. English design in Portugal's 18th century's shipbuilding

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Abstract

Portuguese naval shipbuilding, in the first half of the 18th century, was characterized by the hiring of foreign masters. After an initial hesitation between French and English shipbuilders, it would be the “English School” to dominate, naturally motivated by political circumstances. Until recently, the names of the master builders who worked at the Lisbon shipyard (Arsenal Real) were unknown, despite the numerous references of the time to the famous “English builder”. The results of our research revealed that they were two English masters, William and Francis Warden, active between c. 1715 and 1763. We also know that there were several master-shipwrights in the royal shipyard at Lisbon for much of the eighteenth century, including Josiah Radcliffe, William Warden, and Francis Warden. Thus, the English techniques soon entered Portuguese shipyards. The outcome of this situation was very important, not only in the design of warships as also in improving the construction techniques, in line with the more developed European shipbuilding. For example, in 1714, Lisbon shipyards start to lay ships at sea in a new way, after the idea of “an Englishman”, as also, in 1721, it was adopted the English technique of “bending the planks for the hull of the ships”.

This new practice of English Shipbuilding was also exported to Brazil, as evidenced by the passage of masters (and ship plans) from the Ribeira das Naus of Lisbon, to the shipyard of Bahia, where similar methods were used to build ships on both sides of the Atlantic.

Keywords

Shipbuilding, Naval Architecture, 18th century, Naval History

Biography

Historian of Culture with several books and articles published in several magazines, catalogs and dictionaries, on Visual Culture (Iconography, Art History), Criticism and Art Theory, Shipbuilding and Naval Architecture History.

He holds a PhD in Historical Sciences from Universidade Católica Portuguesa and a M.A. degree in Cultural and Politic History from Universidade Nova de Lisboa. Assistant Professor at IADE- Faculdade de Design, Tecnologia e Comunicação/Universidade Europeia. Associate researcher at UNIDCOM / IADE and CHAM / U.N.L.

In the area of museology, he was Chief Curator at Galeria Rei D. Luís/Palácio Nacional da Aju-

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