



Organização
das Nações Unidas
para a Educação,
a Ciência e a Cultura



Cátedra UNESCO
O Património Cultural
dos Oceanos
Portugal



UNIVERSIDADE NOVA
DE LISBOA

OCEANICA

On 23 March 2021, a ship with 18 thousand containers ran aground in the Suez Canal. This is a man-made waterway, inaugurated in 1869, uniting the Red Sea with the Mediterranean Sea, and therefore the Indian and Atlantic markets, eliminating the need for ships to navigate around the African continent and cross the Cape of Good Hope.

The human desire to explore the oceans, to find shortcuts in navigation, and to tame the territories and the waters precedes the construction of this infrastructure in Egypt. The Bible places Moses leading his people, with divine intervention, on foot through the Red Sea, to escape Ramses II's army. History shows how kings, emperors, city rulers, states, and countries dreamt and built aqueducts for water supply; locks and canals for shipping and irrigation; and other fluvial and maritime architectural and technological feats that shaped the landscape, ports, cities, consumption, and oceanic connections.

This issue of Oceanica celebrates the diversity of human accomplishments throughout the medieval period by presenting examples of engineering and hydraulic technology in the Portuguese shore (e.g. Aveiro's tide mills); a brief section about the commercial expansion from the Atlantic to the North Sea, with information on the first merchant community in Harfleur, Normandy; evidence on fluvial fishing; and a brief description about the importance of the sea and its resources for the production of one of the most important colours in history: purple.

From techniques to natural resources, the oceans and the seas that unite them will continue to be a laboratory for our understanding of global exchanges in the history of mankind. It is this UNESCO Chair's mission to continue to research these natural and human elements, and to give shape and meaning to its history through the ages.

Flávio Miranda (CITCEM, UP, IEM collaborator) &
Amélia Aguiar Andrade (IEM, NOVA-FCSH)

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COVER IMAGE
Sea Chart Fragment, 16th century; CF
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A RESEARCHER AND HIS WORK

Gonçalo Melo da Silva is a researcher at the Institute of Medieval Studies and a fellow at ROSSIO Infrastructure. His research focuses on the medieval period and on issues related to urban, maritime, and religious history. In February 2021, he defended his doctoral thesis: "The Ocean's Gates: Algarve port towns in Late Middle Ages (1249-1521)". The thesis analyses the formation, evolution and functioning of an urban port network, the constitution and evolution of the urban landscape of port towns and the influence of the port and maritime activities in the configuration of the urban space. Among other aspects, it contributes to reinforce the debate about urban hierarchies, small towns, and failed towns in medieval Portugal. Currently, he participates in national and international projects related to his research areas, being Co-PI of the FCT project: "Think big in the small border towns: Alto Alentejo and Alta Extremadura in Leon (13th-16th centuries)".



Gonçalo Melo da Silva (IEM, NOVA-FCSH)

ONE EDITIONS, ONE PHOTO



Aveiro Municipal Assembly, former site of a tidal mill. Tide mill of Aveiro.

Located in Aveiro's city centre, the tide mill is thought to have its origins in the fifteenth century. In the nineteenth century, the building was acquired by the Pinto Basto family, the founders of Vista Alegre. Since 1928, it held the Captaincy of the Port of Aveiro, and is nowadays the municipal assembly.

Ana Cláudia Silveira (IEM, NOVA FCSH)

The image shows the cover of the book "ABASTECER A CIDADE NA EUROPA URBANA MEDIEVAL". The cover is divided into sections: a green top section with the title and a crest logo; a white middle section with the subtitle "Provisioning Medieval European Towns"; and a green bottom section with the names of the editors: Amélia Aguiar Andrade and Gonçalo Melo da Silva. Below the cover is a photograph of a stone archway in a medieval town setting.

THE CHAIR PROMOTES

The volume "Abastecer a Cidade na Europa Medieval", coordinated by Amélia Aguiar Andrade and Gonçalo Melo da Silva, was recently published. The work contains several essays that are essential to the history of the sea and oceans in the medieval period, which highlight their relevance as a source of natural resources and as a means of communication for long-distance trade. The book is open access in the [repository of the FCSH-NOVA](#).

4 SMALL MOMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE IN MEDIEVAL TIMES

Concept, object, traditional fishing craft and marine species

Medieval port towns were urbanised population centres located in coastal areas, very often close to rivers, enjoying varying degrees of self-government and specific buildings and infrastructures, such as shipyards. These towns had societies with specific socioeconomic profiles, with the presence of professionals linked to maritime activities, and in which manifestations of social mobility were possible. They also functioned as elements of articulation of maritime, terrestrial, and fluvial spaces and of economic networks (ARÍZAGA BOLUMBURU, Beatriz e BOCHACA, Michel, "Caractères généraux des villes portuaires du nord de la Péninsule Ibérique au Moyen Âge", in *Ports maritimes et ports fluviaux au Moyen Age*. Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne 2005, pp. 63-78). [Vila Nova de Portimão, urban plant by Alexandre Massai, 1617].



Gonçalo Melo da Silva (IEM, NOVA FCSH)

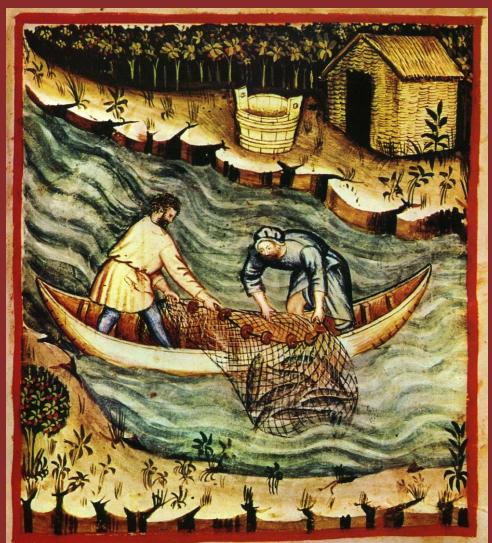


Arabic inscription engraved on a wooden plate containing a religious text (sura), possibly from the 9th -10th centuries. It was discovered in the municipality of Sesimbra, in Lapa 4 de Maio, in the Arrábida Mountains, which during the Islamic period had coenobium fortresses that combined religious and ascetic functions with military purposes for coastal defence [Image: [Rui Francisco \(Loia\)](#)].

Ana Cláudia Silveira (IEM, NOVA FCSH)

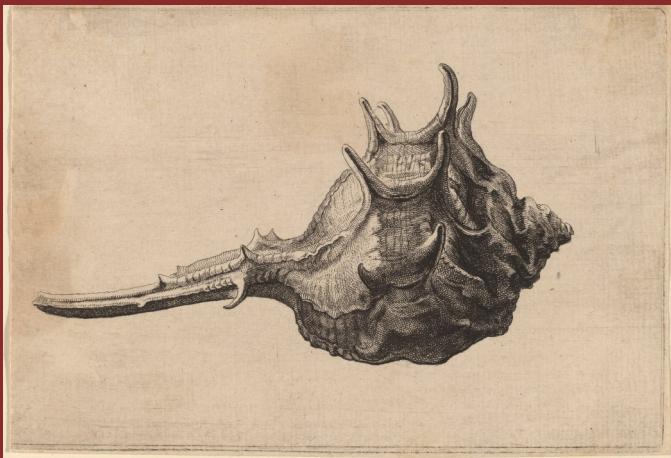
In medieval Portugal, marine fishing played a central role in the economy of coastal societies, especially in those near port towns and cities. River fishing, which sources clearly distinguish from the sea catch, was common throughout the kingdom, favoured by a dense fluvial network capable of providing abundant fish, especially during periods of religious restrictions on meat intake. Aimed for local consumption, river fish were caught through less elaborate methods than seafood. Sources mention fish caught by hand, angling, by employing branches as traps, and even by using flax-leaved daphne to poison the capture. Fishing nets in small boats were also widely used. Along the riverbanks one could find fishing grounds and fish garths. In estuaries, fluvial and maritime fishing often coexisted [Illustration of river fishing in the *Taccuino Sanitatis*, XI century].

Amélia Aguiar Andrade (IEM, NOVA FCSH)



4 SMALL MOMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE IN MEDIEVAL TIMES

Concept, object, traditional fishing craft and marine species (continuation)



The sea offers us one of the most precious natural pigments, the purple, extracted from the hypobranchial gland of the Murex brandaris, which provides colours that vary from shades of red to violet. This mollusc lives in low waters and tide pools in the Mediterranean, and in certain parts of the Atlantic. Its value is known since late antiquity: one would require 10 thousand molluscs to produce one gram of ink. The Phoenicians were the first to master its extraction technique and to massify its production. The Bible considers purple as a sacred colour, with violet being used in the liturgical paraments of Aaron (Ex. 28-1-10). During Roman times, the usage of purple was limited to the emperors' robes; senators could only wear a purple band in their togas. The rarity of this dye and its prestige stimulated the search for pigments that could produce similar colours, like the shellac (a resin secreted by the female lac bug in the South and Southeast India) in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which were used in Portuguese monastic illuminated manuscripts. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, paubrasilia and the purples of orcin (lichens) became popular. These lichens existed in the Azores and were detected by the first explorers and inhabitants of the islands. The Livro de linhagens do Conde D. Pedro, for instance, used this type of pigment in its illuminated manuscripts; however, we do not know the circuit they made before reaching Portuguese scriptoria [Murex brandaris shell by Wenceslaus Hollar, c. 1645].

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Adelaide Miranda (IEM, NOVA FCSH)

"WE ARE ALL ON THE SAME BOAT"

Projects, news, publications and quick readings

◆ Research projects:

Researchers and collaborators of the IEM currently participate in two ongoing international research projects that contribute to the UNESCO Chair's central topic on the Oceans' Cultural Heritage.

The first, reaching its final stage, is "MEDCRAFTS - Crafts regulation in Portugal in Late Middle Ages: 14th - 15th centuries" (PTDC/HAR-HIS/31427/2017), directed by Arnaldo Melo (U. Minho), which aims at studying the regulations of crafts activities in late medieval Portugal, in the 14th and 15th centuries, through the analysis of several Portuguese towns, from different regions, in a comparative perspective. For that purpose, the project team includes researchers from several Portuguese universities. The IEM contributes to this project with a team of members associated to the UNESCO Chair, with the responsibility of investigating maritime-fluvial urban communities: Lisbon, Setúbal, Santarém, and the towns and cities of Algarve.

The second is the Spanish project "The Sea as Frontier. Legal Transgressions in the Atlantic in the Late Middle Ages" (PGC2018-095719-B-I00), directed by Eduardo Aznar Vallejo (U. La Laguna, Spain), and it aims to investigate the societies of the maritime borders of the kingdom of Castile, by focusing on conflict and the means to its resolution. The Portuguese team will contribute to this project by investigating elements of coexistence and conflict management in urban and maritime spaces of the kingdom of Portugal at the end of the middle ages.

The screenshot shows the MEDCRAFTS project website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links to Home, About, Team, Activities, and Tools. The FCT logo is also present. The main content area features the project title "MedCrafts PTDC/HAR-HIS/031427/2017" and a brief description: "Crafts regulation in Portugal in the Late Middle Ages (14th-15th centuries). A scientific project funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology | 2018-2022". Below this, there are sections for "The project" and "Next events". The "The project" section contains information about the project's objectives, sponsor, host institution, partner institutions, team, PI, Co-PI, funding, and duration. It also includes a map of Portugal showing the locations of the urban centers and rivers involved. The "Next events" section displays a calendar for June 2021, with dates from 31 to 11 highlighted. A "MEDCRAFTS project website" link is located at the bottom right of the page.

For slow reading:

- ◆ *Écrire la Mer*, a deluxe edition from Éditions Citadelles & Mazenod (coord. Daniel Bergez, 2020), celebrates the seas in iconography and writing, from Antiquity to the 21st century, through works and authors summoned to this mental space that ranges from literature to art.
- ◆ *There are 101 Sea Creatures in this Book* (Campbell Books, 2019), is a book for us to explore and conjugate marine ecosystems and their inhabitants. It is also an opportunity for us to exercise our creativity and imagination.
- ◆ To be published in July 2021 by New Press, authored by Christina Conklin and Marina Psaros, *The Atlas of Disappearing Places: Our Coasts and Oceans in the Climate Crisis* speaks of a changing geography and the effects of a series of combined factors (species disappearances, acidification and rising ocean waters, melting ice, coastal erosion) on biodiversity, coastal areas and the world's food and climate systems. They illustrate these phenomena with a narrative style and scientific intentionality, indicating twenty affected locations, the impacts on each of them, in a methodology and expressiveness that draw our attention to the risks of an inoperative humanity.

THE PORT OF THE CITY

The circulation of people and goods through the seas and oceans allowed for the interconnection of Portugal with the ports and markets of the medieval world. In Harfleur, in Normandy, the Portuguese established one of their first merchant colonies abroad, at least since 1290. Located about seven kilometres away from the coast, the port of Harfleur was crossed by the River Lézarde (an affluent of the River Seine), thus ensuring the city a privileged position for linking the Atlantic and the Northern traders with the Norman industrial towns and the inland markets of Paris.

In January 1309, King Philippe IV of France (r. 1285-1314) granted the "marchands de Lisbonne établis à Harfleur", a charter of privileges containing a series of rights and norms to regulate their economic life. This charter ensured them the right to elect their broker; to judge crimes that did not involve deaths, mutilation of members, kidnapping, or thefts within the community; to rent homes and warehousing for their commodities at a reasonable cost. Luso-Norman trade flourished for about a century until England conquered Normandy, in 1415, during the Hundred Years' War.



Harfleur seen from the River Lézarde
(Pymouss, Creative Commons)

Flávio Miranda (CITCEM, UP, IEM collaborator)

NOTE FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM:

This Oceanica number made by the Institute of Medieval Studies shows us an essential historical legacy in the interconnection of different areas of the globe in religion, culture and the production of materials and knowledge: the implementation and development of sophisticated legal and governmental devices, forms of organisation and application of technologies. It also shows us the recognition and codification of territories through cartography (Vila Nova de Portimão), activities that emerge from the conditions of nature (maritime and river fishing), testimonies of civilisations that asserted themselves in spaces that today have other meanings (plaque with Arabic inscription found in Sesimbra), and the conception of empirical processes to extract from nature products whose use extended and received a high ritual and symbolic status (the purple pigment). The sentence "... the route taken to reach the Portuguese scriptoria is still unknown", is for whoever reads it a promise of discovery, which, like the creation and improvement of digital tools such as the ROSSIO infrastructure, guide us towards new research and investigations. From these investigations result the individual, collective and international projects of which we have news in this issue. It is with these wishes that the Institute of Medieval Studies Newsletter is passed on to the Institute of Contemporary History.