

Book Review

Karel Davids, *Global Ocean of Knowledge, 1660-1860: Globalization and Maritime Knowledge in the Atlantic World*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. Pp. viii + 331. \$120.00 (hardback).

Globalization is a process that is centuries in the making, and resisting globalization is akin to resisting the tide. Sailors and oceanographers who measure that tide are part of that same process. Karel Davids, in his work *Global Ocean of Knowledge, 1660-1860*, contends that globalization and maritime knowledge are both dependent on the aggregate efforts of many maritime empires through many different disciplines. Spain, France, the Netherlands, and Britain all made their contributions over time, and the amount of contributions changed as the balance of power in the Atlantic world shifted from an Iberian monopoly to a multipolar scenario.

Davids' work is inspired by the Berlin-based "The Globalization of Knowledge" project (conducted by the Max Planck Institute) and by Daniel R. Headrick's *Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981). The Berlin project addresses the relationship between globalization and the growth of knowledge, but does not address technology's role. Headrick fills the gap with his definition of technology as all the means through which humans harness their resources. By investigating the effects of globalization on the growth of maritime knowledge and by that knowledge's effect on globalization, Davids incorporates the best of both works by placing maritime industries as conduits through which people and societies interacted across the oceans.

Davids begins Part One in the late seventeenth century. The Atlantic was more integrated and Spain and Portugal no longer had the luxury of dividing the New World between themselves. Buccaneers and pirates had caused irreparable harm to Spain's power in the West Indies and rival empires emerged. As the French, English, and Dutch challenged Spanish power, state institutions developed that would facilitate colonization. That knowledge was not exclusively applied towards colonial life, but applied towards the metropole as well.

Davids' strength lies in tying the efficacy of individual social networks to state institutions. This was the age of the *curiosi*, who delighted in collecting trinkets and oddities from throughout the world, and their enthusiasm for the exotic popularized institutions' efforts to refine hydrography and celestial navigation.

Part Two focuses on the period from 1730 until 1800, which hosted the shift in transoceanic shipping from the Indian and Pacific Oceans to the Atlantic. Imports from the Americas began to outnumber imports from Asia. Regularly traversed routes including those in the Triangle Trade saw more copper-plated hulls and more experienced navigators, who then made those routes more thoroughly documented and added to their respective country's aggregate cartographic knowledge. With the more frequent shipping came more observations of health issues at sea such as scurvy and attempts by mariners, intellectuals, and bureaucrats to alleviate those problems. Again, globalization supported the cultivation of knowledge while that advanced knowledge assisted the process of globalization. Interpersonal networks composed of dilettantes and experts took an interest in gaining knowledge, and states had a vested interest in cataloging that knowledge partly because only governments had the capability to do so.

Furthermore, Davids asserts that the increased traffic across the Atlantic was no longer trans-oceanic, but regional as more colonies developed markets of their own. There was a thriving regional trade between mainland North America and the sugar islands of the West Indies. Garrisons in the West Indies suffered appalling losses from malaria and yellow fever, leading to renewed efforts by scientific establishments to find means to prevent those tropical diseases from ravaging soldiers, sailors, and settlers alike. European empires had exchanged conquest for commerce by the eighteenth century and control of trade routes and commodities (and the ability to protect them) became paramount.

Part Three covers the period from 1800 to 1860. By the mid-nineteenth century, the abolitionist movement had diminished slavery in the Atlantic world whilst continued industrialization emphasized commodities. At this time, whaling became one of the largest maritime industries in the United States as American whalers extracted the lubricant for factories. As the whalers critically endangered whale species in the Atlantic, they began to follow surviving pods into the Arctic. This coincided with voyages of exploration to find the North Pole or the Northwest Passage, which became lessons in hydrography, zoology, and meteorology as well. This segment expands on *Tools of Empire* and Headrick's descriptions of how expeditions into sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia captured the popular imagination.

In the meantime, mass immigration provided the labor for the United States' factories. Whalers and transport ships crossed the Atlantic, and the rate of shipwrecks increased with the spike in traffic. Again, scientific institutions, governments, and informal networks of dabblers set to work in order to strengthen ship hulls and improve shipboard sanitation and hygiene.

To conclude, Davids has written a work that should appeal to any instructor who is interested in the history of technology or the maritime world. Furthermore, this book would be highly suitable and add depth to a graduate seminar focused on the history of colonization or economic history. Some particular segments on maritime travel would even be useful for a world history survey. Davids convincingly shows that globalization is driven by forces from both above and below. Moreover, the acquisition of knowledge and drive for globalization present a vicious cycle.

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