



CARTAGENA 2014 IKUWA V

ForSEADiscovery: Forest Resources for Iberian Empires: Ecology and Globalization in the Age of Discovery.

Nigel Nayling and Ana María Crespo Solana

Abstract:

In the Early Modern Age (16th-17th centuries) the construction of ocean-going ships was paramount to the development of cultural encounters in what became the Age of Discovery and European expansion. In the case of the Iberian Empires, the establishment of new trade routes brought up the need for armed merchantmen, galleons and smaller vessels, placing unprecedented demands on Iberian forests for the supply of construction timber. Forestry and sea power became inextricably linked, creating new geopolitical tensions, alliances and forest regulations. Key questions in this context are: could Iberian forest resources sustain the increasing demand for ship-construction timber, or was wood imported from elsewhere? If so, how were the trade networks organized? How did domestic forestry practice and timber supply develop and adapt?

This paper will outline the methodologies and objectives of a major multidisciplinary project funded through a Marie Curie Initial Training Network grant (2014-18) which will see a collaboration of universities, state research centres, and maritime archaeology companies. Answers to the above questions will be collected from different natural and written archives, with a focus on shipwrecks, and using a combination of historical, archaeological, dendrochronological and earth science approaches. Whilst training the next generation of mobile European researchers. At this early stage in the project, there is a real opportunity for conference delegates to influence research direction and promote site selection.