


Technological predation and creation of an elite: the Majorcan response to the Spanish shipping situation of the 17th century

*Depredación tecnológica y creación de una élite: la respuesta mallorquina a la situación naviera hispana del siglo XVII*

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#### ANALYTICAL SUMMARY

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This paper studies the diffusion of certain ships to update the merchant fleet and confront a decrease in maritime transport in the 17th century. Such a reduction resulted from the crisis in the Spanish shipyards that started around the 1560s. The situation continued for over a century because of the Thirty Years' War and the Catalan Revolt. The research analyses this question through a study case focused on Majorca, using notarial sources, letters of marque, and corsair bails to build a register of the ships incorporated into the Majorcan fleet and their joint owners. Regarding the latter, the study combines economic inequality indicators and social network analysis to value the control of these shareholders over the island's fleet.

The results suggest there were enough caulkers and shipwrights with enough knowledge to produce settees and tartans, so timber shortage and the manufacturing cost appear as the limits of the sector. Consequently, the Majorcan solution consisted of taking advantage of the wartime situation and fitting corsair ships to steal those ships, forcing a technological diffusion. The incorporation of settees and tartans increased both the cargo capacity and navigation radius of the island's fleet. The treaties of Münster and the Pyrenees allowed the incorporation of such ships more conventionally, without avoiding completely the corsair option until the treaty of Nijmegen. The captains and skippers who supported the armada during the Catalan revolt, and the merchants, liberal professionals, and artisans who collaborated with them, were responsible for this technological predation which led to an initial adoption and the subsequent consolidation of settees and tartans as the new base of the Majorcan fleet. Thereafter, other merchants invested in shareholdings of those ships, as well as in parts of Atlantic boats, once the conventional way become available, in the context of a business strategy with a high degree of diversification to mitigate maritime risks and, in some cases, leading to social and economic mobility.

The limitations of the research consist, on the one hand, of the inability to access private operations, which often had left no traces in notarial records. On the other hand, the data scarcity about fishing ships, which were at the center of naval construction in many localities. Last, future studies will consider to what extent the other islands and surrounding territories could follow a similar strategy to deal with the same problem.

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