

Flemish, Spanish and Portuguese Merchants in West Africa at the End of the Fifteenth Century: Connected Networks, Shared Representations. The case of Eustache de la Fosse (1479-1481)

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Abstract

Eustache de la Fosse, originally from Tournai, embarked on a trading voyage along the Atlantic coasts between 1479 and 1481, travelling from Bruges to the Gulf of Guinea. His account of the journey, *Voyage à la côte occidentale d’Afrique, en Portugal et en Espagne*, survives in the library of Louis de la Fontaine, a merchant and chronicler from Valenciennes, alongside two other travel accounts. It stands as the earliest French-language text to describe the coasts of West Africa.

This paper seeks to analyse de la Fosse’s representation of the regions he visited and the populations he encountered. More particularly, it aims to contextualise his testimony within its broader framework, examining the influence of de la Fosse’s interactions with his Iberian and Italian travel companions and the ways in which his own position and individuality find expression in his writing.

Keywords

Travel account – West Africa – Mobility – Relationality – Premodern Critical Race Studies