This book maps out the crucial mechanisms of global empire building during the Early Modern period and poses at center stage global exchanges between, across and among individuals and empires. The book focuses on instances in which individuals or groups attempted to look for ways to connect beyond the territorial and institutional limitations imposed by their respective empires. In doing so, it demonstrates set of ideal mechanisms of individual and collective agency. They challenged, cooperated with, or represented imperial interests, in what should be perceived as a sliding scale of individual behaviors and motivations, rather than an absolute stance run by central powers.

How did people connect empires and what happened to empires as a result? How did individual and collective agency contribute to the constitution of global maritime empires during the Early Modern period? This book will answer these questions by looking at the role individuals played in the construction of ‘informal empires’, resulting from the enactment of a multitude of self-organized networks operating world-wide, whose main goal was safeguarding their personal social and economic advantages, sometimes cooperating with formal powers, frequently regardless of (and in spite of) state interference.


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