

However dramatic, England's victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588 was neither lucky nor miraculous. It was the result of myriad technological and organizational innovations instigated over the preceding thirty years during the reign of Elizabeth I. Like its continental rivals, England's government in this period grew larger, more powerful, and more centralized. To manage technically complex projects, royal administrators recruited trusted experts to serve as mediators between themselves and those working to complete the project at hand. Eric H. Ash follows the rise of this pivotal new figure, the expert mediator, in the political and intellectual landscape of early modern Europe. Using a series of case studies-copper mining, the rebuilding of Dover harbor in the early 1580s, the introduction of mathematics to navigation, and the creation of navigational manuals-he examines the growing use of such expertise, by the crown's ministers and private entrepreneurs under royal charter. Tracing the evolution of expertise from its practical foundation to the more theoretical approach embodied by Francis Bacon, Ash finds that the individuals most successful in receiving patronage were those who portrayed themselves not as practitioners but as masters of theoretical principles. These mediators increased their social status by distinguishing themselves from common craftsmen. Knowledge and expertise thus acquired status and power, as Ash explores in this instructive early example.

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