A Ship *'for which Great Neptune Raves'*: The *Sovereign of the Seas*, *la Couronne* and Seventeenth-Century International Competition over Warship Design[1]

Abstract: Charles I's great warship the *Sovereign of the Seas* is famed for its design, decoration and importance as a tool that heightened the image of English naval supremacy. By exploring its career, size, name and decoration, this article highlights the *Sovereign*'s significance as a national symbol of political and cultural power. It argues that Charles's leading warship was developed as a reaction to naval advances and current affairs in Europe. Through a diverse range of evidence including diplomatic correspondence, printed texts and artwork from both English and French institutions, as well as relating this to similar advances in the Netherlands and Sweden, the *Sovereign*'s development is internationally contextualised. By comparing it with other contemporary warships, most importantly *la Couronne* of France, it is shown that Charles's flagship was a product of a growing international theatre of maritime activity that was inspired by cultural and political competition, as much as it was by military escalation.

Keywords: Charles I; Louis XIII; Navy; Warships; Sovereign of the Seas; la Couronne; Vasa; Design; Names; Representation.

Charles I's warship the *Sovereign of the Seas* was designed to impress both friend and foe on an international scale. In a poem produced in 1637, the year of its launch, it was described as a ship 'for which great Neptune raves and seemes to long to dance her on his waves'.[2] Its

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[2] BL[The British Library, London], Egerton, MS2982, f. 155r: unknown author, 'On his Majesties great ship The Soveraigne of the Seas'.

size, decoration, and political and cultural symbolism would have captivated the seventeenth-century onlooker and this appeal continues today.

It is often the largest warships of the fleet that attract the attention of the modern audience. With the exception of the few small-armed ships of significance for their maritime feats, such as the *Golden Hind,* the most admired warships of the early modern period are, arguably, its largest ones. Despite this, their purpose and career successes were questionable considering that they rarely had an impact in battle. Sixteenth and early seventeenth-century flagships were often recorded at 1000 to 2000 tons and were, as a result, restricted in their utility at sea. Aside from being a financial strain on state resources, their size hindered their manouvreability. When engaged in combat, an armed vessel's greatest asset was its ability to move quickly and turn effectively, which became increasingly important as the period progressed, and broadside tactics became the norm. Yet, because of their inappropriate size this proved difficult for the largest warships, and this era continued to be dominated by small and medium sized armed-vessel combat. The slender and nimble full-rigged pinnace, hoy and race-built galleon were not only cheaper to construct, maintain and equip, but were also a more effective tool for maritime combat. This point was also raised by Walter Ralegh, when he remarked, 'a ship of six hundred tons will carry as good ordnance as a ship of twelve hundred tons; and though the greater have double her number, the lesser will turn her broadsides twice before the greater can wind once'.[3] Despite this understanding, cumbersome warships continued to be constructed during the seventeenth century.

By constructing a warship with greater tonnage, ordnance, gundecks or a more embellished façade than a rival sea force, warships were a key part of international competition and diplomacy. Their design served as a deterrent to an international (or

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[3] W. Ralegh, 'Observations Concerning the Royal Navy and Sea-Service. Dedicated to the Most Noble and Illustrious Prince Henry, Prince of Wales' in W. Oldys and T. Birch (eds), *The Works of Sir Walter Ralegh* (8 volumes, Oxford: The Oxford University Press, 1829), VIII, p. 337.

domestic) rival. It was not only in times of war that a foreign adversary might encounter them. Ambassadors, merchants, mercenaries and other international representatives would have experienced the power symbolised by these warships during royal ceremonies and informed those at home.

At the end of the Tudor dynasty, the English standing navy had little need for warships that surpassed 1000 tons. Warships of this size had a somewhat disastrous history. Henry VIII's *Henri Grace à Dieu* was launched in 1514 at an impressive 1500 *tuns* before being rebuilt and reduced to 1000 *tuns* in the late 1530s, and then later being destroyed by fire at Woolwich in August 1553 because of negligence.[4] Meanwhile, to the delight of the English, Francis I's *la Grande Françoise* of an alleged 2000 *tuns* was completed in the early 1520s yet failed to launch at Le Havre because its size prevented it from leaving the harbour.[5] As the century progressed, Elizabeth I, with neither the ego nor competitive aggression of her father, took to relying on her nautical advisors' recommendations and after 1564 no royal warship was constructed greater than 800 tons.[6]

After Elizabeth's reign, however, the English navy began the construction of several large and imposing warships. The 1200-ton *Prince Royal* was launched on 25 September 1610 and was rarely commissioned to sea under James I except for royal ceremonies.[7] More importantly, during the early seventeenth century, European monarchs including Charles I and Louis XIII of France competed to control the largest warship, returning to the Anglo-French rivalry that characterised naval construction during the early sixteenth century.

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[4] John G. Nichols (ed.), *The Diary of Henry Machyn, Citizen and Merchant-Taylor of London* (New York: AMS Press, 1963), p. 43. *Tuns* are used in this case (instead of tons) because warship tonnage was estimated until the late-sixteenth century when Mathew Baker's mathematical formula was adopted for greater accuracy and consistency in measurements.

[5] B. W. D. Redding, 'Divided by La Manche: Naval Enterprise and Maritime Revolution in Early Modern England and France, 1545-1642' (PhD Thesis, University of Warwick, 2017), pp. 179-81.

[6] B. W. D. Redding, 'English Naval Expansion under the French Threat, 1555-1564', *The International Journal of Maritime History*, 28:4 (2016), p. 652.

[7] R. Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail 1603-1714: Design, Construction, Careers and Fates* (Barnsley: Seaforth, 2009), pp. 2-3; E. Milford, 'The Navy at Peace: The Activities of the Early Jacobean Navy: 1603-1618', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 76:1 (1990), pp. 31-32.

Although relations between England and France were ambicable during the 1630s, rising tensions fuelled by the Thirty Years War, France's growing navy, and English claims of sovereignty over the Channel influenced the decision to commission new warships.[8] Emblematic vessels were constructed by both realms: *la Couronne* was completed in Brouage in 1636, while the *Sovereign of the Seas* followed with its launch in October 1637.

The impressive size and decorative devices of both *la Couronne* and the *Sovereign* promoted what Kevin Sharpe described as the 'culturally constructed and communicated' authority of their monarch.[9] The two kingdoms were not alone in fabricating this image. In October 1634, just two months after the *Sovereign* had been commissioned, Christian IV of Denmark organised thirteen days of festivities for his son's wedding at huge expense, which featured a parade of the Danish navy, entertainment onboard the *Store Sophia* and a pageant in which Christian appeared as Neptune.[10] Such events demonstrate that the navy was becoming increasingly recognised as a cultural and diplomatic tool across Europe.

This article will focus on the early career of the *Sovereign of the Seas* and its connection to Louis XIII's *la Couronne*. Contrary to what Charles intended, historians have argued that the needless expense attributed to the construction of the *Sovereign* is representative of the weaknesses present in his navy. One understandable view shared by Andrew Thrush is that Charles's ship money fleets rarely engaged in combat and the monarchy wrongly prioritised its representation rather than its military effectiveness.[11] For Michael Oppenheim, the *Sovereign* 'until she was cut down, was the largest, most ornate, and most useless ship afloat'.[12] Meanwhile, N.A.M. Rodger has countered this criticism by

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[8] K. Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 82-86, 511-12.
[9] K. Sharpe, *Image Wars: Promoting Kings and Commonwealths in England, 1603-1660* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), p. xiii. Yet, as J. D. Davies had recently highlighted, Sharpe 'barely mentioned' the navy in this great tome: J. D. Davies, *Kings of the Sea: Charles II, James II & The Royal Navy* (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2017), p. 13
[10] Thanks to Martin Bellamy for this information.
[11] A. Thrush, *The Navy Under Charles I, 1625-40* (PhD Thesis, University College London, 1990), p. 179.
[12] M. Oppenheim, 'The Royal Navy under Charles I', *The English Historical Review*, 9 (1894), p. 93.

addressing the central importance of representation in the period. For Rodger, 'this contrast between fantasy and reality is not a helpful way of understanding Charles's situation. Deterrence has always been, and is still, a matter of persuasion, of creating an image, and in the seventeenth century gilded magificence was the image of power.'[13] This article takes Rodger's observation further by applying it to a wider international context that investigates the relationship and careers of the *Sovereign*, *la Couronne* and other similar contemporary warships. By doing so, it provides a more detailed account of *la Couronne*'s design, career and influence on the *Sovereign* than previously produced in print. It argues that although the *Sovereign* was initially militarily futile, it was nevertheless a potent secular symbol of English authority and sea power within an increasingly dynamic international maritime theatre.

1. *The Career of the Sovereign and its Adversaries*

The *Sovereign of the Seas* had a long career that spanned across four English monarchies as well as the Interregnum and, perhaps for this reason, historians, including Angus Konstam, have more recently praised the vessel as both an important symbol of power and, contentiously, for its military value. Konstam suggests that with its initial launch in 1637 the *Sovereign* was 'an extremely potent fighting ship' and progresses to describe it as 'the ultimate sailing ship of the Renaissance'.[14] Both statements are contested in this article. Furthermore, Rodger describes 'the first true three-decker' that carried one hundred guns as 'easily the most powerful ship in the world' for the next twenty years.[15] This is despite the fact that it was not until 18 September 1652, almost fifteen years after its launch, that the

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[13] N.A.M. Rodger, *Safeguard of the Sea: A Naval History of Britain, 660-1649* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 380.
[14] A. Konstam, *Sovereigns of the Sea: The Quest to Build the Perfect Renaissance Battleship* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), pp. 7, 281.
[15] Rodger, *Safeguard*, pp. 388-89.

Sovereign was first used in combat during the Battle of the Kentish Knock. In another example, John Sephton has glazed over the vessel's limited sea experience prior to the First Anglo-Dutch War, writing that by remaining in the Medway during the prolonged period after its launch 'she rode majestically at her moorings in the element for which she was designed'.[16] In reality, prior to its rebuild commissioned in 1651 that reduced the height of its forecastle to six feet, removed its upper round house, and shortened the quarterdeck and poop, the *Sovereign* was a spectacle designed to represent English sea power, but its sailing and fighting capabilities were restricted by its size.[17] Indeed, it could be said that the *Sovereign* was actually two different warships distinguishable by time, function and design. There was the majestic vessel of Charles I that survived until the Interregnum and, the redesigned warship that participated in the conflicts against the Dutch and French, and was destroyed during a fire at Chatham in January 1697.

<<[IMAGE 1 HERE: Peter Pett and the Sovereign of the Seas, see attached document]>>

Charles I's original vessel was constrained by its size, and was never part of the ship-money fleets. Although the *Sovereign* was launched while the levy was being collected, it was not constructed from its revenue, nor was ship money used to fund its service. As the levy was raised on a county-by-county basis, and as the size of each county determined the size of warship that each county was required to fund, the *Sovereign* was too large for any single county to bring to service.[18] This limited its value as a weapon of English defence.

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[16] J. Sephton, *Sovereign of the Seas: The Seventeenth-Century Warship* (Stroud: Amberley, 2011), p. 44.

[17] BL, Add. MSS 9306: 21 October 1651. For a comparison to the redesigned ship, see National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, PZ7257-001: 'William van de Velde, the Elder's drawing of the *Royal Sovereign* in 1661'.

[18] See Exchequer Accounts for the Navy: TNA [The National Archives, Kew], E351/2275-76, 2278, 2280, 2282: 24 March 1635-31 December 1639

The unprecedented sum of £40,833 8s 1½d to build the *Sovereign* – with a further charge of £24,753 8s 8d for its ordnance – was largely attributed to extraordinary expenditure from the royal coffers.[19] Despite this colossal expense, a number of subsequent amendments to its upper works, including those made to its hull soon after its launch, suggest that Charles's celebrated warship suffered from many of the typical problems associated with warships of a similar size.[20] With a keel measuring 127 ft, a breadth of 46 ft 6 in, and a depth of 19 ft 4 in, the *Sovereign* was easily the largest warship in Charles's fleet.[21] Yet, size did not connect to sea and combat effectiveness. The *Sovereign* was cumbersome and its redevelopment commissioned in 1651 reduced its upper infrastructure in attempt to resolve these issues.[22] Furthermore, J. D. Davies has highlighted the *Sovereign*'s restrictions in combat even following its 1651 rebuild when it continued to rely on 'embarrassingly short range' artillery pieces. This issue was raised during the Battle of the Kentish Knock, when her captain grew furious at the short ranges of her shot that often fell short of the Dutch target, whilst also being displeased by their rate of fire. Indeed, although its sailing abilities were no longer an issue, its out-dated guns appeared to be, which led the *Sovereign* to return to port for the remainder of the war to await a new fitting of lower-tier guns, which never arrived. For Davies, it was not until a further rebuild in 1659 by master shipwright John

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[19] Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail*, p. 5; TNA, E351/2277: 1 January 1636-31 December 1636; TNA, SP 16/378, f. 109, 'An exact Certificate of the Charge in materials', 9 January 1637. Sephton also records that the cost of casting increased again on 27 June 1638 to £26,441 13s 2d to provide four demi-cannon drakes for the stern chase: Sephton, Sovereign, p. 105.

[20] Sephton, *Sovereign of the Seas*, p.15. As Michael Oppenheim first highlighted, this staggering sum is best understood under the mind set that the average 40-gun ship of the time would have cost £5500 to £6500. M. Oppenheim, *A History of the Administration of the Royal* Navy (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Temple Smith, 1988), p. 260.

[21] TNA, SP 16/361, f. 132: 'Officers of the Navy to Lords of the Admiralty', 13 June 1637. In a second document the vessel is recorded 'according to the Old way' with a breath 'from outside to outside' of 47 ft 10 in, and a depth from the 'extreame bredth to the fronte edge of the keele' of 21 ft 2 in: TNA, SP 16/361, f. 134: 'The Dimensions of the Great Shipp', 13 June 1637.

[22] Sephton, *Sovereign of the Seas*, p. 141.

Taylor, which provided the mean for its armament to increase again to 100 guns (after being reduced to ninety before 1642), that the warship became 'devastatingly effective'.[23]

Even if the *Sovereign* had been more active before its rebuild, it would have been of little value in combat because most ships the realm faced were significantly smaller. During the 1630s, the English navy was predominantly occupied with defending the kingdom and its shipping against the small and nimble ships used by the Dunkirkers and North African corsairs, and the *Sovereign*'s size prevented it from being employed to this purpose.[24] The far smaller vessels of its opponents would have been more manoeuvrable and an impossible target for all but the heavy guns on its lowest decks.

With this in mind, the original *Sovereign*'s greatest contribution to the state was not in combat against smaller foes. Instead, it was built as a front and deterrent to be projected at potential enemies and rivals. As the monarch's prized asset, and shining trophy, it was designed to enhance Charles's prestige. The king's personal influence and control in its development reflects this. In an annotated letter from Phineas Pett, the king's master shipwright, to Charles on 13 June 1637, Pett requested that the launching of the *Sovereign* be delayed for:

> if your Majestie have a resolution to send the shipp to sea this present Sommer,
> Shee will growe very fowle under water to ride in the River till the Springe of the
> yeare, and it wilbe held necessary to have hir into docke againe to grave and
> cleane hir under water which wilbe some trouble and a double charge.[25]

In the margin of the same document, Charles responded 'I am not of your opinion'. Pett then continued to list the advantages of delaying the *Sovereign*'s launch, while leaving the matter to the king's 'princely consideracion, and tymely resolution' to which Charles concluded 'I

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[23] J. D. Davies, *Pepys's Navy: Ships, Men & Warfare 1649-1689* (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2008), p. 47.
[24] *ibid,* p. 12.
[25] Thrush, *The Navy under Charles I*, p. 38; TNA, SP 16/361, f. 135: 'Phineas Pett to the King', 13[?] June 1637. Thrush is hesitant about providing a precise date for this document, although State Papers records the document as 13 June 1637.

will; and therefor it is fitt that the new Ship be launched as soone as may bee'.[26] By ignoring the advice of his master shipwright, Charles demonstrated his persistence and ignorance. His ambition was likely influenced by the completion of *la Couronne* in France in the previous year. Refusing to be outdone in naval affairs by his French rival, Charles applied pressure on Pett and the shipyard workers of Woolwich to launch the warship with haste. Yet, this decision resulted in its failed launch on 25 September 1637 because of shallow tides.[27] It was only with a second attempt, three weeks later, that the *Sovereign* was put to sea in a totally unspectacular fashion, by being launched at night, without the audience and theatrics that could be expected from such an event. Thereafter, until its 1651 rebuild, Charles I's warship had a fruitless career with its only experience at sea coming shortly after its ordnance was loaded at Greenhithe in the summer of 1638. After twenty-four days cruising in British waters, the *Sovereign* docked at Chatham where it remained until the Interregnum.[28] Indeed, even during the Civil War, the English Parliament controlling the fleet from London did not prepare the *Sovereign* for service because of the cost and time required to equip it.[29]

Given the importance that Charles applied to royal display and power throughout his reign, both the *Sovereign*'s original design and its forced launch were typical of the king's style of governance, especially when considering the launch of Louis XIII's great warship in the previous year. *La Couronne* is consistently referred to as 2000 tons in French contemporary records, although this figure was determined by different methods to English techniques.[30] French shipwrights continued to estimate tonnage into the seventeenth century and the larger the vessel, the more susceptible it was to inaccuracy.

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[26] *ibid.*
[27] Sephton, *Sovereign of the Seas*, p. 38; Davies, *Kings of the Sea*, p. 32.
[28] Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail*, p. 5.
[29] Rodger, *Safeguard of the Sea,* p. 421; E. Murphy, *Ireland and the War at Sea, 1641-1653* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012), p. 8.
[30] BN [Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris], français 6408, f. 299: 'Armée navalle de Ponant', 1640. It is also possible that *la Couronne*'s tonnage recordings are the result of France trying to claim that it possessed the largest warship in Europe.

As vessels larger than 800 tons were rare, estimated measurements in France were often based on speculation, rather than mathematical formulae.[31] In fact, although accounts of *la Couronne*'s dimensions vary in minor detail, if the measurements recorded in 1636 can be trusted, then, it had a keel of 130 *pieds* (while being a total of 158 *pieds* in length), a breadth of 44 *pieds* and a height of 19, making it 1087 tons (1449 with *tons and tonnage*) using the Old Baker Rule and divisor.[32] In comparison, Charles I's warship measured 1141 tons (1522 with *tons and tonnage*).[33] The *Sovereign* therefore was the taller of the two, while also being perhaps slightly greater in tonnage, although *la Couronne* was longer. With the presumption that Charles indeed knew that the *Sovereign* was marginally larger than *la Couronne*, his increased emphasis on his warship's speedy launch is further explained by his desire to own the largest operable warship.[34]

<<[IMAGE 2 HERE: la Couronne, see document attached]>>

Evidently warship construction was internationally competitive and could be seen as a form of arms race. Monarchs competed to control the largest, most heavily armed and extravagant vessels possible, and this can be seen in cases prior to the commission of the *Sovereign*. Even though Charles's warship was influenced by *la Couronne*'s design, Louis XIII's warship in turn was developed after careful observation of rival navies. As

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[31] See B. Redding, *Divided by La Manche*, p. 162 for table that highlights these differences in measurement.

[32] Old Baker Rule: (keel x depth x breadth) / 100. BN, français 6408, ff. 469-72: 'Description du vaisseau du Roy nommé La Couronne', 1636, has been used here, although other dimensions with small differences are also recorded, see: TNA, SP 78/106, f. 422: 'Description of the French Ship La Couronne', c. 1636; R. Winfield & S.S. Roberts, *French Warships in the Age of Sail 1626-1786* (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2017), p.51. This measurement, if correct, would more closely conform to d'Infreville's original estimate of between 1200 and 1700 *tuns*. E. Sue (ed.), *Correspondance de Henri d'Escoubleau de Sourdis* (3 volumes, Paris: L'Imprimerie de Crapelet, 1839), III, p. 204: 'Voyage et inspection maritime de M d'Infreville, 23 March 1631'. Also take note that French *pieds* were marginally larger than the English equivalent, with a *pied* being 1.066 of an imperial unit meaning that *la Couronne* was slightly larger than the figures suggest, but not substantially so. See Winfield & Roberts, *French Warships*, p. 2.

[33] TNA, SP 16/361, f. 134: 'The Dimensions of the Great Shipp', 13 June 1637.

[34] Sephton also determines by making his own measurements that the *Sovereign* was indeed the largest warship. 'Appendix 6' in Sephton, *Sovereign*, p. 195.

acknowledged by the military chaplain, Georges Fournier, in his 1643 published work *Hydrographie*, *la Couronne*'s construction was ordered by Armand-Jean du Plessis, Cardinal de Richelieu, to imitate and produce a warship greater than England's *Prince Royal* of 1610.[35] A useful tool for diplomatic events, when it was subject to international attention and gossip, the *Prince Royal* was only used for military service once prior to its rebuild between 1639 and 1641, when it served under Captain Henry Mainwaring during the Earl of Rutland's Spanish expedition in the summer of 1623.[36] At 1200 tons, it was the largest warship in the English fleet until the *Sovereign*'s launch. This might explain why *la Couronne* was initially estimated as 1200 tons in 1631.[37]

Another direct influence for *la Couronne*'s commission in 1629 was the construction and loss of the Swedish King Gustavus Adolphus II's *Vasa* that famously sunk on its maiden voyage in August 1628. *Vasa* was, and still is, adorned with beautiful carvings and symbols that would have engaged with both elite and popular audiences. As monarchs competed to own the largest and most richly adorned vessel, warships increased their value as objects of cultural and political power.

La Couronne was constructed between 1629 and 1634 in La Roche-Bernard, a private shipyard located in Morbihan, Brittany.[38] The location was selected because it was close to two requisitioned forests acquired by the crown from the duc de Rohan following the Edict of Alès in September 1629, and their appropriation provided the resources required for the warship's construction. Yet, after considerable delays in its production, *la Couronne* was

[35] G. Fournier, *Hydrographie contentant à theorie et la practique de toutes les parties de la* navigation (Paris: Michel Soly, 1643), p. 55. Also reprinted in second edition in 1667, see fn.77.
[36] Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail*, pp. 2-3.
[37] A. James, 'Voyages et inspection maritime de M. d'Infreville sur les côtes françaises de l'océan, 1631', *French History*, 15:4 (2001), p. 476.
[38] L. Denoix, '"La Couronne": Esquisse d'une nouvelle restitution', *Association des amis du musée de la marine*, 32 (1938), p. 188.

towed to Brouage where it was completed by Matthieu Casteau and most likely armed, before being launched in 1636.[39]

La Couronne is recorded with seventy-two cast-iron guns, fourteen of which were 36 livres located in its lower deck, whilst a further twenty-six of 18 livres were placed on its main deck. The remainder would have been distributed across the ship, including a small number under the fore and aft sections. In terms of artillery, the vessel was not excessively overloaded, although this may have been connected to French gunfounding limitations at the time. Indeed, when compared to the second-largest warship in the French navy, le Vaisseau du Roi of 1000 tons, which held fifty-two cast-iron guns, six of which were 36 livres, it is obvious that la Couronne was not overburdened with artillery in relation to the rest of the French fleet.[40] The same cannot be said for the Sovereign. Although initially designed by Pett to hold ninety bronze muzzle-loaded guns, in December 1638 Charles I ordered an increase to a total of 102, making it the first known warship to reach an armament of more than 100 guns. This included twenty 40-pound guns for the lower deck, in addition to eight 32-pound demi-canons, thirty 16-pound culverins, and thirty 12-pound demi-culverins on its three gundecks.[41] The Sovereign's armament was then, at least on paper and in appearance, superior to all other warships in Europe, and this was clearly Charles's intention. Yet its extra armament does not appear to have been necessary, and perhaps la Couronne's 36-livres cannons on its lower deck would have competed on equal grounds with the Sovereign if the two had ever clashed. By 1642, the Sovereign's armament was reduced to ninety guns suggesting that the extra weaponry was eventually viewed as needless, whilst also adding unnecessary weight to the vessel.

With this said, la Couronne was not without its problems. Following its launch, the French warship's size restricted its utility because it was expensive to keep in service. To

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[39] BN, français 6408, f. 168: 'Armée navalle du Roy sur l'océan en 1636'.
[40] BN, francais 6408, f. 168. In the same document, la Couronne is recorded as 1800 tons.
[41] Konstam, Sovereigns of the Sea, pp. 294-95.

sustain its 505-man crew by 1638 *la Couronne* was draining the state of 57,630 *livres* every three months, a figure over 20,000 *livres* greater than the admiral's *le Vaisseau du Roi*.[42] In this context, *la Couronne* was a burden on state revenue, and its continued retention was associated with the monarch's patronage, for its superiority in battle was not expressed in the available records.[43] In fact, in its only significant military engagement, the warship's strength was restricted by its design. In the naval campaign of 1638, the French sea forces complemented the prince de Condé and the duc de La Valette's siege of Fuenterrabia by ensuring that Spanish reinforcements did not arrive by sea. When Henri d'Escoubleau de Sourdis, the French Admiral for the campaign, sighted a smaller Spanish squadron, the Spanish forces responded by sailing into the shallow harbour of Guetaria on 17 August. This prevented *la Couronne*, which was commanded by Claude de Launay de Rasilly, along with several other large French warships, from approaching the shallow waters of the harbour. As a consequence, when Sourdis destroyed the Spanish squadron on 22 August, it was a result of fireships and the smaller vessels within his fleet; *la Couronne* played a very limited role in the victory.[44]

In the following year, *la Couronne* was again called to service for a siege, led by Sourdis, on La Coruña. When the fleet arrived near Cape Prior on 9 June, Sourdis was well armed with a fleet of forty warships, alongside both fireships and storeships.[45] *La Couronne* was initially intended to be part of a direct attack on the city, but these plans were quickly aborted and replaced by a naval blockade after surveying its heavy fortifications. Even this was short-lived; on 24 June the decision was made to abandon the siege and rendezvous at

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[42] BN, français 6408, f. 285: 'Estat de la despence par mois', 1640. While, in 1640, Louis XIII's crowned warship cost 11,605 *livres* per month to sustain its 500-man crew.

[43] A. James, *The Navy and Government in Early Modern France 1572-1661* (Chippenham: The Boydell Press, 2004), pp. 116-17; A. Berbouche, *L'Histoire de la royale du moyen-âge au règne de Louis XIV: La marine dans la vie politique et militaire de la France* (Saint Malo, Brittany: Pascal Galodé, 2011), pp. 164-65.

[44] James, *Navy and Government*, pp. 88-89.

[45] *La Couronne* is recorded in a number of documents as part of the 1639 fleet, commanded by the vice-admiral, Launay de Rasilly. AN [Archives Nationales, Paris], Marine B⁴1, ff. 235-36, 286-87. The best account of the La Coruña expedition remains C. R. Boxer (ed.), *The Journal of Maarten Harpertszoon, Anno 1639* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), pp. 7-11.

Belle-Île. It was on this journey that *la Couronne*'s weaknesses became most apparent. Between 24 and 26 June 'une furieuse tempeste' struck the fleet and *la Couronne* was caught in the storm, causing significant damage, and demasting the vessel and three other accompanying warships.[46] Yet, whereas the other impaired vessels were restored within fifteen days, the scale of the damage to Louis XIII's iconic warship, including the loss of its main mast, could only be restored in the large harbour of Brest, which prevented it from being repaired the same year.[47]

Although *la Couronne* was disarmed at Brest in March 1640 with Launay de Rasilly still recorded as its captain, it did not return to service.[48] Shortly after Louis XIII's death in May 1643, *la Couronne* was condemned and demolished.[49] The estimated cost of 25,000 écus to repair and refit the warship was considered too expensive.[50] Along with the damage sustained from the storm, the French warship had been prematurely attacked by rot. Like Charles I's *Sovereign* then, Louis XIII's largest warship had an unimpressive career largely because its size constrained its operational use. Yet, despite being restricted by 'the technological limitations of the age', the French regime's commitment to the warship throughout its long construction programme and short career shows that it must have been valued as a symbol of power.[51] It is somewhat surprising that *la Couronne* was prepared for an offensive expedition twice between 1638 and 1639, and its subsequent damage and loss in June 1639 would surely have served as a lesson for all aspiring naval powers. In this regard, before its rebuild between 1651 and 1652, by largely remaining stationary in dock, it could be

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[46] AN, Marine B⁴1, ff. 291-94: 'Lettre de M. Amelot de Beaulieu en bord de la Couronne à Belisle, 29 juin 1639'.

[47] AN, Marine B⁴1, ff. 291-94, 323-24: 'Ordre de l'armée navalle du Roy', 27 July 1640; Denoix, "La Couronne", p. 188.

[48] BN, français 6408, ff. 281-82, 283, 285, 299: March 1640.

[49] *La Couronne* is still recorded at Brest in late July 1644 according to Français de la Boullaye le Gouz's account. This is the last recorded account of the warship that I have found. T. Crofton Croker (ed.), *The Tour of the French Traveller M. de la Boullaye le Gouz in Ireland, A.D. 1644* (London: T. And W. Boone, 1837), pp. 54-55; Musée de la Marine, MN-089-02: 'Couronne Vaisseaux, 1637-1649'.

[50] BN, nouv. acq. fr 9390, f. 65 cited in Musée de la Marine, MN-089-02: 'Couronne Vaisseaux, 1637-1649'.

[51] James, *Navy and Government*, p. 117.

argued that the *Sovereign* was being used more effectively for cultural, national and diplomatic gain, as militarily, these warships were ineffective.

2. *Naming a Warship*

As the *Sovereign* was constructed to represent an ideology and identity that was associated with English monarchical sea power, nomenclature was an important process in a warships development. It was a long held European tradition to name the largest warships in a state fleet after the crown and its lineage, which is a system that has continued today. Both Henry V and Henry VIII named their largest warship the *Henri Grace à Dieu*, and the same Tudor vessel was renamed the *Edward* with Edward VI's succession; Mary I meanwhile ordered the construction of the *Philip and Mary*, and Elizabeth I had the *Elizabeth Jonas*. This practice continued into the seventeenth century with James I's *Prince Royal* being named after Prince Henry, the *Vasa* being named in honour of the Swedish royal house, and even the Dutch flagship *Brederode* being named after Johan van Brederode, the brother-in-law of the Prince of Orange. In this regard, the *Sovereign of the Seas* conformed to a centuries old tradition that celebrated and embodied royal power.

Nevertheless, the *Sovereign*'s naming was a far more considered and complex course than tradition might suggest, and it was subject to public speculation. As the name implies, Charles's warship was named as a direct attack on the free seas debate that was current in maritime law during the early seventeenth century.[52] When the Dutch lawyer, Hugo Grotius, published *Mare Liberum* in spring 1609 in Leiden, he attempted to justify the Dutch seizure of a Portuguese vessel laden with bullion off the coast of Singapore by arguing that 'the sea

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[52] D. Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 109-116; Rodger, *Safeguard*, pp. 380-82; P. Emmer, 'Mare Liberum, Mare Clausum: Oceanic Shipping and Trade in the History of Economic Thought' in C. Buchet & G. Le Bouëdec (eds.), *The Sea in History: The Early Modern World* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2017), pp. 671-78.

could not have any servitude imposed on it because by nature it should be open to all'.[53] With this claim, *Mare Liberum* also attacked English sovereignty on the seas, an argument that struck a nerve across the Channel. The English crown had laid claim to the self-titled English Channel for centuries and Charles I perceived Grotius's work as a direct attack on his sovereign authority.[54] Consequently, Charles was eager to patronise the writing of John Selden, who dedicated his work, *Mare Clausum*, to the king in 1635.[55] Selden's work attacked Grotius's idea of an open sea and was written during the reign of James I, but had been prohibited to avoid international conflict. Charles's decision to support the work showed a clear change in foreign policy from his father, and this was further reflected in the naming of his warship. In his argument, Selden claimed that the Channel was part of the English crown's domain, '[we] having continually possessed the whole *English* shore in its full latitude under one entire Empire for above a thousand years'.[56] Such views were disseminated and supported throughout England, and the growing argument was encapsulated in the *Sovereign of the Seas*.[57] Yet, it is apparent from both the literature produced before its launch, and from letters of correspondence, that deciding its name was a drawn-out process that caused open discussion in both private and public spheres. One example of this is a poem drafted before the vessel's launch, while its name was undeclared. The poem, titled *On His*

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[53]H. Grotius, *Mare Liberum (The Free Sea)*, trans. R. Hakluyt, ed. D. Armitage (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2004), p. 31

[54] It is unclear when the term 'English Channel' was first used, although English claims to the Channel were justified through manipulating the tales of Alfred the Great and Edgar I.

[55] J. Selden, *Mare Clausum* (London, 1635). Also see J. Boroughs, *The Soveraignty of the British Seas; proved by records, history, and the municipal laws of this kingdom* (London, 1633).

[56] Selden, *Mare Clausum*, p. 331; W. Welwood, *An Abridgement of All-Sea Lawes* (London, 1613); *idem*, *The Sea Law of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1590).

[57] Armitage, *Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, p. 118. Armitage has argued that the Rump Parliament would later reprint and endorse these two sources by Boroughs and Selden in order to assist in consolidating a British identity. In a later edition published in 1739, the foreword claimed that the 1633 edition 'hinted' that the *Sovereign* should be built, and in doing so, that Boroughs's work became its namesake.

Majesties Greate Shipp Lying almost finished in Woolage Dock Anno. 1637 shows the cultural and political importance attributed to providing this vessel with a prestigious name.[58]

> Then tell me thou seems't a floating isle
>
> What name doest thou aspire to? What high style
>
> Which in a few gold Letters may comprise
>
> All Beauties and presage [of] thy Victories
>
> Since thou art so much greater than The Prince
>
> (Which to Thee only sayes I serve) and since
>
> The meaner Charles usurpes our Souveraignes Name[59]
>
> What canst thou be except The Charlemaigne
>
> Or will thy Royall Master Christen thee
>
> The Edgar to revive his memorie

Nomenclature not only had the potential to characterise a warship, but also to strengthen political and ideological constructs of the state. By proposing iconic warrior kings as its name, it is apparent that Charles I's flagship was fabricated in its name and design to reflect authority, strength and respect. The decision to name the warship the *Sovereign of the Seas* was therefore a multifaceted one. First, it was used to support Charles's political ideology that attacked Grotius's *Mare Liberum* and encouraged maritime empire. Second, it continued a tradition that used royal names, titles and other secular associations to empower the crown's largest warships. Finally, it was used to represent a monarch who aspired to strengthen his personal fleet for both defence, and also arguably, for offensive operations in The Thirty Years' War.

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[58] BL Egerton MS 2982, ff. 155-56: unknown author, 'On his Majesties great ship The Soveraigne of the Seas'. With an active interest in the *Sovereign* as the designer of its carvings, it is possible that Thomas Heywood was the author of this work. I have found no evidence to suggest that this poem was published.

[59] The *Charles* built in 1632 at a burthen of 810 *tons*, was an impressive size, but was still significantly smaller than the *Sovereign of the Seas.*

It is also interesting to note that while Charles's regime opposed *mare liberum*, the opposite was the case in France, which had ramifications for the name of Louis XIII's leading warship. As *grand maître de la navigation*, the Cardinal de Richelieu supported Grotius's legal arguments and even attempted to hire the lawyer as a commercial expert in the French kingdom because his work on free trade was overtly anti-Habsburg.[60] With a smaller standing navy and a failing Atlantic empire at the time of its admiralty's dissolution in October 1626, Eric Thomson has argued that Grotius provided the 'intellectual foundation' for Richelieu's 'maritime and commercial statecraft' that would unfold in the coming years.[61] Indeed, *mare liberum* was likely in Richelieu's mind when in 1627 he provided the *Compagnies des cents associés* with its charter to monopolise the fur trade in North America.[62] Unlike its English rival then, *la Couronne* was not named to assert ownership of the seas, because doing so would have conflicted with Richelieu's anti-Habsburg free trade ideology. Although the French warship represented royal power by name, it did not go as far as declaring dominance at sea. Nevertheless, in a similar fashion to the *Sovereign* and also the Swedish *Vasa*, Louis XIII's flagship still attempted to embody the power of the king and was primarily designed to flatter royal pride at a time when royal representation was internationally competitive.[63]

For an aspiring European state, warship nomenclature was therefore a significant cultural and political activity that could connect the power and virtues of its monarch and subjects to the vessel. The construction of large warships that did not necessarily have a major impact in combat still had their advantages as sources of cultural dispersion that represented the state. By providing state warships with symbolic national names, the state

[60] E. Thomson, 'France's Grotian Moment? Hugo Grotius and Cardinal Richelieu's Commercial Statecraft', *French History,* 21:4 (2007), pp. 377-94.
[61] *ibid*, p. 394.
[62] H. B. Biggar, *The Early Trading Companies of New France: A Contribution to the History of Commerce and Discovery in North America* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Library, 1901).
[63] Berbouche, *Histoire de la royale*, p. 164: 'Au premier rang desquels la *Couronne* flattait l'orgueil royal'.

was able to create the appearance of naval strength which, as Alan James has argued, 'was so important to the actual exercise of military power'.[64] Neither the *Sovereign*, *la Couronne* nor the *Prince Royal* are known today for their actions in combat, but rather for their design and what they represented.

3. *Decoration and Design*

Prior to the integration of the *Ark Royal* into the English navy in January 1587, decorating English warships was held in little regard when compared to the magnificence of the *Sovereign*. Not all warships had figureheads, and those that did generally conformed to two devices: the lion or the dragon, which was carved and placed at the beakhead's end.[65] Paint, flags and coats of arms on the transom of vessels were usually the only devices used to identify Elizabethan warships with their owners. During the early seventeenth century however, this quickly changed as a new baroque style of carving and gilding developed that was marked by the launch of the *Prince Royal*. James I's leading warship's hull that cost £868 to gild and paint was not only decorated in a superior manner to its Elizabethan predecessors, it also possessed a figurehead of St. George on horseback victorious over the defeated dragon.[66] Seventy shillings was paid for the 'bridle, sworde, lanceheade, and spurres for the George in the Beakeheade and a tounge for the Dragons mouthe' that were made out of iron.[67] Like the *Sovereign*, the *Prince Royal* was designed to impress and was influenced

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[64] James, *Navy and Government*, p. 164.

[65] L.G.C. Laughton, *Old Ship Figureheads and Sterns* (New York: Dover Publishing, 2001), pp. 66-67.

[66] R. C. Anderson, 'The Prince Royal and Other Ships of James I', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 3:9 (1913), pp. 272-75; *idem*, 'The "Prince Royal" of 1610', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 6:12 (1920), pp. 365-68; Sephton, *Sovereign of the Seas,* pp. 21-23; Davies, *Kings of the Sea*, p. 27.

[67] TNA, E351/2248: 1 January 1610-31 December 1610.

by Danish design. James's warship was ordered in November 1607 after having witnessed Christian IV's *Tre Kroner* that docked in London in 1606.[68]

Thirty years later, the *Sovereign* was constructed with an even greater emphasis on its appearance, becoming a mobile national emblem that epitomised England's historic valour at sea. The playwright Thomas Heywood was commissioned to produce the plans for its carvings. Heywood was well connected and was a more than suitable candidate for Charles's vision. As well as being brought to the king's attention for his plays, he also had a firm relationship with both Inigo Jones and the Christmas family, who carved the *Sovereign*'s works. In addition to this, he had experience working on the Lord Mayor's Show as its writer from 1631.

It is also thanks to Heywood that a significant amount is known today about the *Sovereign's* carvings and the ideas that inspired their creation, as an accompanying text to the ship's launch titled *A True Description of His Majesties Royall Ship* was published in 1637. The figurehead was a particular focus of the text, with Heywood describing that 'upon the *Beak-head* sitteth royall *King Edgar* on horse-backe, tramp'[l]ing upon seven Kings...[Edgar] being indeed the first that could truely write himselfe an absolute Monarch of this Island'.[69] King Edgar (reigned 959-975) '*did (as justly he might) write himselfe* Lord of the Foure Seas'. [70] This seventeenth-century reinvention of Edgar was intended as an obvious parallel to Charles I's own ideology of sovereign power at sea. By constructing the *Sovereign*, Charles was showcasing his descent from Edgar, King of Wessex, founder of England and

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[68] Rodger, *Safeguard of the Sea*, pp. 386-87.

[69] T. Heywood, *A True Description of His Majesties Royall Shipp, Built this Yeare 1637 at Wool-witch in Kent* (London, 1637), pp. 29-30; A. R. Young, *His Majesty's Royal Ship: A Critical Edition of Thomas Heywood's A True Description of His Majesties Royall Ship* (New York: AMS Press, 1990). A second edition of Heywood's work was published in 1638.

[70] *ibid*, p. 33.

commander of a legendary fleet of 3600 ships.[71] Edgar was the role model and influence for the king and became the spirit of the warship, as presented in its associated poem:

> [Edgar]Who so long since on Land and Ocean raign*e*d
>
> Scepter and Trident (joyne) with Sword maintain*e*d.
>
> Upon thy gorgeous Beake when I behold
>
> That warlicke King completely arm'd in gold
>
> Whilst att his feete seven Vassayle-Kings doe throw
>
> Their crowned heads, me thincks it must be so.[72]

With Edgar as its figurehead, Charles was making a claim to his self-perceived maritime superiority, a policy that had the potential to conflict with French, Dutch and other European ambitions.

John and Mathias Christmas, who followed Heywood's plans, carved the embellishments of the *Sovereign*'s transom and upperworks.[73] Peter Lely's mid seventeenth-century portrait, *Peter Pett and the "Sovereign of the Seas"* (Image 1) along with Pett's own presentation drawing of the ship's carvings, provide researchers with a clear visual account of its design, while John Sephton's work on the ship explains the symbolism and theatrics of its transom.[74] The transom was a piece of mythical theatre including the goddess Victory, Jason carrying an oar and the Golden Fleece, Neptune riding a seahorse and an armoured man at its centre representing both Charles and Edgar.[75] This final image was reminiscent of similar devices displayed on the *Vasa*, which featured as its figurehead a lion representing both

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[71] Rodger, *Safeguard of the Sea*, pp. 19-20.

[72] BL, Egerton MS 2982, f. 155: unknown author, 'On his Majesties great ship The Soveraigne of the Seas'.

[73] Sephton, *Sovereign of the Seas*, pp. 85-97. Sephton's work provides a highly detailed account of the *Sovereign*'s carvings, and should be consulted for more information on this. See also Davies, *Kings of the Sea*, pp. 31-32.

[74] Although typically attributed to Peter Lely, this painting has disputed provenance. G.S. Laird Clowes, 'The Portrait of the Sovereign', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 17:2 (1931), pp. 169-73. See also Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, accession no. 32.192.

[75] See National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, E8875: 'Plan of the "Sovereign of the Seas"', c. 1637.

Gustavus Adolphus and Augustus Caesar.[76] When comparing the similar devices incorporated onto the two warships, the popularity of, and international demand for, warship embellishments is made apparent. Sporting similar prestigious devices to its international rivals, the *Sovereign*'s design was evidently developed with influence from international sea forces.

To complete its majestic design, on 23 March 1636, Charles penned the directions for the *Sovereign*'s gilding and painting:

> The head with all the carved work thereof, and the rails, to be all gilt, and no other colour used thereupon but black. The stern and galleries to be gilt with gold and black in the same manner, with the rails on them to be all likewise gilt with gold. The sides to be all carved work according to the draught which was presented to his Majesty and that carved work to be all gilt with gold, and all the rails of the sides to be likewise gilt with gold and no other colour to be used on the sides but black.[77]

The use of this two-colour scheme may at first appear uncharacteristic of the king's ambitions. Unlike the *Vasa* which used red for the background of its transom and upperworks (a colour identified with the royal house of Vasa), alongside a range of other colours including blue, gold, white and green, the *Sovereign*'s colour scheme could be seen as limited. Restricting the number of colours used was also not an English tradition, considering that Tudor warships displayed the green, red and yellow colours associated with their royal house. Charles's orders were most likely influenced by the design of the *Prince Royal*, a warship that was largely decorated dark green and gold, with the exception of red for its half-

[76] F. Hocker, *Vasa: A Swedish Warship* (Riga: Medströms Bokförlag, 2015), p. 69.
[77] TNA, SP 16/350, f. 149: 'Directions Given by Charles I for Gilding and Painting the Sovereign of the Seas', 23 March 1636; Sephton, *Sovereign of the Seas*, p. 37.

deck and white for the Prince of Wales's feathers carved on its side.[78] Although it could be considered minimalistic, the *Sovereign*'s colour scheme was effective and did not decrease the vessel's magnificence. Its golden carvings contrasted with its black background leading the Dutch, whose warships lacked decoration, with the exception of their stern, to nickname it 'The Golden Devil' during the First Anglo-Dutch War. Indeed, painting English warships in this style continued for the remainder of the century, illustrating the impact of the *Sovereign* and its predecessor.

In comparison the background of *la Couronne*'s transom and upperworks were painted blue while its carvings, including the royal coat of arms held by angels on its transom, were gilded.[79] Blue signified the warship's connection to the French crown in a way that the *Sovereign*'s colour scheme was unable to achieve; yet the English warship was nevertheless the most visually impressive. *La Couronne*'s decoration signified its ownership but it was not as theatrical, being more aligned to Dutch minimalism rather than the baroque fashion of Charles's warships. Alongside its transom, a number of *fleur-de-lis* were carved and displayed along its upperworks and, for its figurehead, *la Couronne* featured Hercules slaying the hydra. This device was more ambitious with its political message and artistic design when compared to the traditional carvings on its transom. The figurehead had two symbolic meanings. First, Hercules was used as part of the *renovatio* that had developed in France during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[80] Henri IV was regularly portrayed as Hercules for his victories in the French religious wars, and was often depicted slaying Cerberus (as a representation of the Catholic League). The use of Hercules and the hydra on

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[78] H. C. Vroom, 1613, 'The Arrival of the Elector Palatine and his Bride at Flushing in May 1613 aboard the Prince Royal', Franz Hals Museum, Haarlem.

[79] Denoix, "La Couronne", p. 195.

[80] C. Vivanti, 'Henry IV, the Gallic Hercules', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 30 (1967), pp. 176-97; M. R. Jung, *Hercule dans la littérature française du XVIe siècle, de l'Hercule courtois à l'Hercule baroque* (Geneva: Droz, 1966); F. Bardon, *Le portrait mythologique a la cour de France sous Henri IV et Louis XIII* (Paris: Éditions A. et J. Picard, 1974) also includes a number of images of Hercules used for political representation in the period.

la Couronne was a similar symbolic device in light of the recent victory against the Huguenots of La Rochelle. In addition, man was portrayed as defeating the sea. This makes for an obvious comparison with the *Sovereign* and reflects the Cardinal de Richelieu's Grotian influence and commercial ambitions. Whereas the *Sovereign* declared that Charles owned the sea, *la Couronne* implied that France could overcome and defeat it; Edgar on horseback was aiming to conquer the sea, whereas Hercules was defeating the hydra, suggesting that France had the means to overcome the sea's wrath and thus open it for French trade and military power. For Charles I, as the ruler of an island state whose history was dependent on the sea for protection, it was necessary for the English crown to lay claim to it. Whereas in France, the crown merely needed to ensure that the sea was not an obstacle to its strength and commercial ambitions, and this was reflected in *la Couronne*'s motto embedded on its stern *Subdidit Oceanum*.[81]

With the exception of its figurehead, *la Couronne*'s design was inspired by Dutch methods and style. As a route to quickly bolstering his fleet during the La Rochelle campaign, Richelieu ordered the construction of six warships that were assembled in Dutch shipyards between 1625 and 1627, and an additional order for five 200-ton frigates to be built in Le Havre was made soon after, which were based on similar vessels of Flemish design. Thereafter, in August 1638, six further newly constructed Dutch warships arrived at Le Havre, exhibiting France's continued reliance on the international shipbuilding industry.[82] The French navy was therefore impressed with Dutch shipbuilding, and this explains why *la Couronne* was constructed to the Dutch style with its lead shipwright, Charles Morieu of Dieppe, having trained in the Netherlands. Indeed, France was not the only state to rely on Dutch expertise. Two Dutch shipwrights, Henrik and Arendt Hybertsson, led the Swedish

[81] TNA, SP 78/106 f. 422: 'Description of the French Ship La Couronne', c. 1636. [He has subdued the ocean].
[82] James, *Navy and* Government, pp. 111-116; Winfield & Roberts, *French Warships in the Age of Sail*, p. 51.

Vasa's construction while German carver Mårten Redtmer designed its carvings.[83] There was, as a result, a number of similarities in warship design across northern Europe, which is perhaps most apparent in Dutch and French warships. This has caused confusion among academics and researchers who have previously mistaken the appearance of *la Couronne*.[84] The depiction of 'un navire royal' in the second edition of Georges Fournier's *Hydrographie* has often been mistaken for the warship, when it was actually based on an image of *le St. Louis* by Hendrik Hondius.[85] *Le St. Louis* was a Dutch-built warship purchased by France between 1625 and 1627. Nevertheless, this confusion, and the considerable likeness in the two warships' design is evidence of the Dutch influence on French warship construction, and indicates that shipbuilding in northern Europe was produced through international exchange and influence.

Historians have also highlighted the number, expense and design of the *Sovereign*'s ordnance.[86] With three gundecks, Charles ordered shortly after its launch for the warship to hold more than one hundred guns: a 'magic number' that all European leaders could respect.[87] Settling on 102 brass pieces being cast, each piece was engraved with 'the Rose and Crowne, the sceptre and trident, the Anchor and Cable, and a Compartement under the Rose and Crowne with this inscription (*Carolus Edgari Sceptrum stabilivit aquarum*)'.[88] The sceptre and trident represented Charles as master of both land and sea, while the anchor and

[83] F. Hocker, *Vasa: A Swedish Warship* (Riga: Medströms Bokförlag, 2015), pp. 36-39, 67.

[84] Sephton, *Sovereign of the Seas*, p. 29.

[85] The figurehead was not Jupiter riding an eagle, which was used as an illustration in the second edition of Georges Fournier's work, mistakenly believed to have been *la Couronne*. Fournier, *Hydrographie contenant la theorie et la pratique de toutes les parties de la navigation* (Paris, 1667), printed between pages 12 and 13. See reprint (Grenoble: Éditions des Quatre Seigneurs, 1973). For Hondius print see: BN, Estampes Hennin, 2093: 'Navire royale fait en Hollande, 1626'; Musée de la Marine, BN-089-02: 'Couronne vaisseaux, 1637-1649'. Also see Denoix, "La Couronne", pp.186-96; P. Le Conte, 'Les ponts de "*La Couronne*" étaient-ils continus ou coupés?', *Association des amis du musée de la marine*, 5 (1932), pp. 41-45; C. de la Roncière, *Histoire de la marine française* (6 volumes, Paris: Plon-Nourrit et Co, 1899-1932), IV, pp. 593-95.

[86] Sephton, *Sovereign of the Seas*, pp. 98-117. See pp. 106 and 111 for images of these pieces.

[87] B. Lavery, *The Ship of the Line, Volume I: The Development of the Battlefleet 1650-1850* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1983), pp. 16-17 quoted in Thrush, *The Navy under Charles I*, p. 38.

[88] TNA, SP 16/387, f. 159: 'Estimate of the Charge of Graving of the Brasse Peeces for the Sovereigne', 16 April 1638. [Charles like Edgar has the sceptre of the established seas]. Oppenheim, 'The Royal Navy under Charles I', pp. 102-103.

cable demonstrated the importance of the navy to the state. Meanwhile the artillery pieces'

Latin inscription returned to Charles's reflection on Edgar, and his desire to control the sea.

Yet, in the design of its ordnance, the *Sovereign* was not as unique as Charles might have

hoped, for Richelieu also commissioned bespoke artillery for France's navy with similar

intentions, and *la Couronne* would have carried these. Indeed, as early as 1624 Richelieu

ordered sixty canons for the navy that incorporated the anchor into their design. The Musée

de l'Armée exhibits a canon designed for the navy that was cast in 1636 and was used on *la

Couronne* or one of its fellow warships. The piece bears the arms of France and Navarre,

with an L for Louis, and the chain of the *Ordre du Saint-Esprit*. While asserting the authority

of the crown to whoever was operating this weapon, it also featured the anchor as well as the

inscription 'Cardinal de Richelieu'. With obvious relations to maritime affairs, the anchor

was also used to associate the weapon with Richelieu, who had integrated the symbol into his

personal coat of arms. This very same coat of arms was displayed below the royal device on

la Couronne's transom.[89] In this regard, both the similarities and differences between the

Sovereign and *la Couronne*, as well as the ambitions that were aspired to with their design, is

most apparent when considering the vessels in tandem.

<<[IMAGE 3: Canon de Marine de 12]>>

Conclusion

The careers, names, and cumbersome size and design of warships such as the *Sovereign of

the Seas* suggest that they were not developed for military strength alone, as could be

presumed. Instead, these colossal men-of-war were constructed and maintained primarily to

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[89] Musée de la Marine, B99-41632: 'Un plan du modèle de la Couronne'; Crofton Croker (ed.), *The Tour of the French Traveller*, p. 55.

earn respect for the rulers who owned them. Thus, on 5 November 1637, the *Sovereign* was drawn to centre stage when thousands gathered to see the vessel as part of the Moroccan ambassador's visit. Those in attendance included the Venetian ambassador, who praised the warship's beauty.[90] Although the *Sovereign* soon after returned to dock, where it remained stationary and unarmed at Chatham between 1638 and 1651, knowledge of its existence and opportunities to see the vessel in dock still had some results. The inspiring effects of these warships were not limited to their domestic audience, as they could also deter as well as impress, foreign rulers and representatives. It has been shown that during the early-seventeenth century, European monarchs competed in an arms race which was not directed by the number of weapons (although this, too, gradually increased as the period progressed) but instead by a warship's size and design, a competition that was driven by both political and cultural factors. [91]

Although the leading warships of the period were designed to reflect the virtues of the crown, they also signify the emergence of a growing international maritime theatre that enabled cultural exchange. This article has shown that Charles I was not the only European monarch to enhance his navy with warships such as the *Sovereign* that were designed to represent the monarchy and its political agenda. The leading 'first-rate' warships of the period were a product of international competition. They were designed to impress and deter at the expense of considerable financial and material resources. *Tre Kroner*, *Prince Royal*, *Vasa*, *la Couronne* and the *Sovereign* were closely connected by similar origins, ideology and decorative devices. Their development from commission to launch was influenced by international activity and the exchange of Danish, Dutch, English, French, German and

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[90] G. Glover, *The Arrivall and Intertainements of the Embassador Alkaid Javrar Ben Abdella with his Associate Mr R. Blake, from the High and Mighty Prince, Mulley Muhamed Sheque, Emperor of Morocco, King of Fesse and Suss* (London, 1637), p. 19; Sharpe, *Image Wars*, pp. 235-36.
[91] See J. Glete, *Navies and Nations: Warships, Navies and State Building in Europe and America, 1500-1860* (2 volumes, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1993), II, appendix 2.

Swedish ideas. Instead of being seen as a statement of insularity, the English navy should be viewed as the product of European influences that shaped the strategy and self-preservation of the crown. With this in mind, despite the *Sovereign* displaying the virtues and history of the English crown, it was also the product of, and a reaction to, a wider European theatre.

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