Risk, the story goes, is a category inextricably linked with industrial and post-industrial societies. Some analysts of late 20th and early 21st century societies, however, have argued that it was the early modern or pre-modern period, the time of discoveries, conquests, and colonization, that fostered the development of modern risk society. This paper aims at testing this narrative and looks at possible concepts of risk in the “Age of Exploration.” A particular focus will be on what kinds of risk Europeans encountered in the early modern Atlantic world and how they assessed those risks.

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