Paul Freedman. *Out of the East: Spices and the Medieval Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 2008. Pp. x, 275. $30.00.

This is a magnificent, very well written, and often entertaining book that is also a major contribution to European economic and social history, and indeed one with a truly global perspective. As Paul Freedman so correctly and aptly states in his introduction: "The passion for spices underlies the beginning of the European colonial enterprise, a force that remade the geography, politics, culture, economy, and ecology of the entire globe."

The first and most obvious question that the author poses is this: why did the Europeans, and the Romans before them, maintain such a high and constant demand for spices over almost a millennium? He dismisses the still widely held belief that spices were necessities: that is, preservatives required both to preserve food and to disguise the tastes of either poor-quality or, worse, decaying foods. Not so. Instead, salt was the universal preservative, along with pickling, smoking, desiccating, or air-curing foodstuffs. All of these methods were relatively cheap, while, from the Roman era, spices were very expensive. Indeed, the fact that spices were so expensive, out of the income reach of much and probably most of medieval society, should itself indicate that spices could not possibly have been a general social necessity.

If, then, spices were instead luxury goods, two questions arise that guide and necessarily govern most of the rest of Freedman's admirable study. What explanations can be offered for such a demand for spices from an evidently small but important segment of Roman and medieval society? A major emphasis of the book is that for the aristocracy and the upper strata of the bourgeoisie the consumption of spices was necessary in order to demonstrate and substantiate superior social and economic status, akin to their wearing luxury apparel of silks, furs, and scarlets or other very fine woolens. That helps to explain an apparent economic paradox. For if a primary law of economics is that demand varies *inversely* with price, the consumption of spices (and diamonds, and silks) proves the contrary case: that very high prices for spices, symbolic of luxury values, in themselves sustained demand among the wealthy.

But of more concern to economic historians is the question of why and how such a trade in spices and other luxury goods significantly affected the economy and society of Europe, let alone the world economy. Luxury production and trades have never been the routes to modern economic growth. The modern British industrial revolution began, after all, with cottons, not silks, even though water-powered mechanization in silk spinning ("throwing") had preceded that in cotton spinning by five centuries (Lucca, Bologna). Nevertheless, I fully agree with Freedman that the spice trade had a very genuine importance for many economies in medieval and early modern Europe: in particular, for Venice and Genoa, Portugal, the Low Countries (both Antwerp and the Dutch Republic), England (the Levant and East India Companies), and the Ottoman Empire, to name only the major participants. And who can doubt their importance, in turn, for European economic development?

Chapter one is devoted to the culinary use of spices in cuisine: principally (in order of importance) black pepper, cinnamon, ginger, and saffron, followed by sugar, nutmegs, cloves, mace, and galingal (similar to ginger, no longer used in Europe or the Americas). Unlike today's Western cuisines, spices were used in all the main dishes, not just desserts—and used in a far greater variety and in much greater quantities, at least in the kitchens of the prosperous, if not just ultra-wealthy households. For his research, Freedman consulted more than 140 cookbooks and many treatises, in many languages, from both the Roman and medieval eras. Several recipes are provided, but individually, and scattered through the book. I would have preferred them to be grouped together in an appendix that should also have included, for the sake of comparison, modern-day Asian and north African recipes, to reveal the similarity of the major spices used. The author is perfectly correct in asserting that the primary use of such spices "was in sauces to accompany meat or fish," or fowl, which was otherwise prepared fresh and simply roasted, grilled, or boiled. That provides further evidence to combat the still common view of their role as preservatives.

Chapter two considers the widespread medicinal role of spices as digestives (a very major role that is often overlooked today), as healing or curative drugs, as aphrodisiacs, and also as contraceptives (though their role as abortifacients is not mentioned) and as methods deemed effective in warding off various diseases. Chapter three continues with the role of spices as aromatics and perfumes, and especially their religious significance in terms of incense. He points out a major paradox: that the Islamic world, the key source of most spices, utterly rejected this role of spices as incense in religious worship.

That leads in turn to a consideration of the link between spices, and Paradise, the Garden of Eden, thought to lie in the distant, mysterious, and magnificent East. Indeed, a major contribution of this book, based on an immense amount of literary, iconographic, and artistic research, is to demonstrate that a key factor in the centuries-long allure of spices was their Eastern connection, and particularly an assumed connection with Paradise, or at least with exotic, mysterious Eastern lands of enormous wealth and all the earthly pleasures in vast abundance. Indeed, the idea that spices and such goods were abundant and relatively cheap at their actual source (despite tales of their being guarded by deadly serpents) provided a major incentive to bypass Muslim and other Asian middlemen in order to find a relatively short, direct, and low cost route to the East and thereby reap enormous profits—such as those reaped by merchants in Alexandria, Beirut, and Venice.

That theme is further developed in the next two chapters: numbers four on "Trade and Prices" and five on "Scarcity, Abundance, and Profit," both of which examine the sources, production, trade, and transmission of various spices, medicinal products, and dyestuffs in and from Asia. While the nature of demand is obviously essential to understanding the high value of spices, so is the nature and structure of supply, especially in explaining often severe fluctuations in spice prices in Europe itself. One of the most remarkable treatises that the author offers us is by a contemporary of Christopher Columbus, Martin Behaim, a Nürnberg geographer who correctly observed that both the high prices and their fluctuations were principally due to the long and generally perilous distances from eastern and southern Asia to Alexandria and, even more importantly, to the high transaction costs that included numerous exactions of customs duties and other taxes, perhaps a dozen or so. No serpents were offered as cost factors in this explanation! Freedman also demonstrates that for one other important spice, saffron, the source of its scarcity was not distance—i.e., transportation and related transaction costs—but labor costs. The fact that producing just one pound required the extraction of 70,000 stamens, with just three per plant (thus requiring over 23,000 saffron plants), with no labor-saving machinery, fully explains why saffron, though widely cultivated, even within Europe, was then and is now the world's most expensive spice. In Toronto today, saffron costs about $1700.00 per pound, compared to just $7.67 CAD (= $6.00 USD) per pound of ginger, and $10.99 CAD (= $8.59 USD) per pound of pepper.

The following chapter on "That Damned Pepper" examines the reverse side of the coin, so to speak: the inherent moral dangers presented when such ultra-luxurious commodities, though intrinsically good, instigated a variety of sins (at least in the minds of moral reformers): greed, self-indulgence, vanity. Chapters seven and eight concern the trials and tribulations that Europeans endured to make direct contact with the sources of spices in not only Asia but also Africa. Freedman rightly devotes considerable attention to the roles that Portugal and Spain played in establishing direct sea routes to both the East Indies and the West Indies (the latter initially thought to be Asia), thereby inaugurating four centuries of European overseas imperialism.

Having given this fine book unstinted praise so far, I must now offer a few qualifications, principally concerning two related issues: prices and money (precious metals). First, if the essential thesis of the book concerns the very high value of spices in Europe, over so many centuries, where is the evidence? To be sure, the author presents several citations of prices throughout the text. But prices—especially nominal, silver-based money-of-account prices, drastically affected by chronic medieval coinage debasements and by periodic changes in the supply of precious metals—are useless in themselves. They are meaningful only when they are compared, over time and space, with either a consumer price index, or at least with the prices for other important commodities and the purchasing power of labor. Only once (so far as I can see) does Freedman do so, and that is in citing such evidence from an online lecture (never formally published) that I presented in October 1983 and again (revised) in November 1988.

In the 1988 lecture I presented evidence for both London and Antwerp in 1439 (only the London evidence is cited in Freedman) comparing the prices of pepper and various other spices with those for a variety of other foodstuffs, textiles, and a building craftsman's daily wage—then and also now. Such cross-temporal comparisons are crucial for clarifying matters of price; for example, the reader may find it useful to learn that in 1438–1439 a master mason or carpenter could have purchased 0.241 kg of pepper in London or 0.284 kg in Antwerp with his daily wage, but today (in Toronto, November 2008), he could purchase vastly more: 10.919 kg of black pepper. In 1438–1439, master masons in Antwerp and London seeking to buy saffron could have acquired only 13.06 grams and 20.62 grams respectively, with their daily wage; and today's Toronto mason could acquire only 70.55 grams.

My 1983 lecture included a graph showing that in the reign of the Roman Emperor Diocletian (301 C.E.), a pound of ginger (no pepper data were available) was worth the equivalent of 5,000 days' wages for a Roman master mason, but by 1200, that value had dropped to "just" 8.6 days' of a mason's wages, while pepper then cost 13.9 days' wages—thus not substantiating Freedman's view that pepper was always the cheaper spice (John H. Munro, "The Luxury Trades of the Silk Road: How Much Did Silks and Spices Really Cost?" in John E. Vollmer, E. J. Keall, and E. Nagai-Berthrong, eds., *Silk Roads, China Ships: An Exhibition of East-West Trade* [1983]). A pound of cinnamon, which had cost an Italian mason 3.0 days' wages in 1200, cost much more (8.3 days' wages) in 1500 and 5.25 days' wages (London), as late as 1750. The remarkable difference between medieval and present-day values, now relatively so low, illustrates the veritable technological revolutions that have occurred since then in production, transportation, and marketing, but also in the productivity of labor (its marginal revenue product, for the economist).

If I may now offer a criticism, it is simply this: annual spice prices for London and Antwerp, along with prices of many other commodities and wages, are readily available from 1400 to 1700 in James A. Thorold Rogers's *A History of Agriculture and Prices in England from the Year after the Oxford Parliament (1259) to the Commencement of the Continental War (1793)* (1881–1887), vols. 1, 4, and 5; and Herman Van der Wee's *Growth of the Antwerp Market and the European Economy, 14th to 16th Centuries* (1963), vol. 1.

The other important issue concerning prices is the long-standing debate about whether or not a rise in pepper and other spice prices in the fifteenth century provided a significant profit incentive for European merchants to seek out a direct sea route to the Spice Islands of the East. In 1968, Frederic Lane, then the leading historian of medieval Venice, published an important paper to refute that view ("Pepper Prices before Da Gama," *Journal of Economic History* 28:4 [Dec. 1968]: 590–597). His Venetian data demonstrate that earlier in the century pepper values rose sharply after the Mamluk Sultan al-Ashraf Barsbay (1422–1438) had imposed a rigorous monopoly on pepper sales at Alexandria. But immediately after Barsbay's death, spice prices then fell to even lower levels than those that had prevailed before his reign, and remained low until the Portuguese (Vasco da Gama) reached India and returned to Lisbon with a boatload of spices in 1499. Lane contended that pepper values then soared in Venice because of Portuguese monopolistic control of the spice trade. Eliyahu Ashtor fully supported Lane on pre-Vasco da Gama spice prices, though not entirely on the role played by Barsbay. Freedman, in an article published in *Speculum*, correctly reported Lane's thesis, but without details ("Spices and Late-Medieval European Ideas of Scarcity and Value," *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies* 80:4 [Oct. 2005]: 1209–1227).

Unfortunately, Freedman subsequently encountered an online paper by the eminent and persuasive economic historians Jeffrey Williamson and Kevin O'Rourke, who sought to refute Lane's views, in all respects ("Did Vasco da Gama Matter for European Markets? Testing Frederick Lane's Hypothesis Fifty Years Later," The Institute for International Integration Studies (IIIS), Discussion Paper, Trinity College Dublin, no. 118, March 2006). In his current book, Freedman, without examining Lane's evidence, cites this paper to contend that Lane's views are no longer tenable. In my view, however, Williamson and O'Rourke (and thus Freedman) seriously misunderstood both Lane's views and his data. Their primary argument is that data presented in nominal, silver-based, money-of-account prices are useless—in principle, a valid charge—unless "deflated" and presented in "real terms" to take account of inflation. Lane, however, presented his pepper data in terms of Venetian ducats with a fixed, unvarying content of 3.560 grams fine gold (a good representation of "real" values), and only up to 1510—well before the onset of the inflationary, silver-based Price Revolution (whose impact on gold prices is very complex).

Lane's second thesis, that the Portuguese used their supposed monopoly powers to raise spice prices (e.g., in Venice) is, however, difficult to substantiate. The most obvious reason why pepper values in Venice soared from 1499 to 1504 (but then fell) is the temporary dearth of spices in Alexandria and Beirut, where Venice conducted its spice trades. During these years spice supplies in those two ports fell by seventy-five percent. Even when they recovered by 1513, only 314,000 lb of spices reached Beirut, compared to 4,256,000 lb (1,930,488 kg) in Lisbon (Munro, "South German Silver, European Textiles, and Venetian Trade with the Levant and Ottoman Empire, c. 1370 to c. 1720: A Non-Mercantilist Approach to the Balance of Payments Problem," in Simonetta Cavaciocchi, ed., *Relazione economiche tra Europa e mondo islamico, seccoli XIII–XVIII* [2007]). But in the important Antwerp and London markets, the former serving as the Portuguese spice entrepôt, there was only a very modest rise in spice prices for the years 1499–1502 (Van der Wee; Thorold Rogers) and no sustained rise in real values thereafter.

My other concern about Freedman's discussion of precious metals in the spice trade has an even greater scope, and global importance. In his chapter on "Spices and Moral Dangers," Freedman very usefully cites many late medieval diatribes against the trade in spices and other Asian luxury goods for their role in "draining" precious metals, and thus the wealth and very lifeblood of the European economy, to the East. There is now an enormous economic history literature on this topic in terms of adverse balance of payments (especially its supposed role in the late medieval "depression") that the author does not really consider. These late medieval criticisms were not irrational and were certainly not just used as a stick with which to beat any perceived moral dangers of spice consumption.

The simple historical fact is that neither the Romans nor subsequent Europeans, before the nineteenth century, could have possibly acquired spices and other Asian luxuries without exporting significant quantities of precious metals. The reason is simple: Europeans were then able to offer Asian markets only a very few manufactured commodities that would have been competitive in terms of both quality and cost. But the chief adverse economic factor was again distance: the extremely high transportation and transaction costs involved in usually dangerous maritime journeys of over 10,000 kilometers, as Behaim noted in 1492.

The one major European commodity that proved to be the vital exception was silver, principally because its relative value in terms of both gold and goods was higher in most parts of Asia than in Europe; that pro-silver bimetallic ratio remained generally true until the eighteenth century. Employing various data supplied by Ashtor, I have produced calculations to indicate that in Venice's Levant trade (Alexandria and Beirut) during the 1490s, a mean of 62.5 percent of the purchase values of African and Asian goods in those ports were paid for in precious metals, chiefly silver. In the seventeenth century, Europeans faced an even more adverse balance of payments problem in their commerce with southern and eastern Asia. Between 1660 and 1720, the English East India Company, in acquiring Asian spices, silks, and other very costly luxury goods, but also increasingly cotton calicoes, had to make proportionally even larger payments in silver. Thus, silver exports accounted for a mean of 78.9 percent of the purchase values, compared to thus only 21.1 percent from the sales of European merchandise (K. N. Chaudhuri, "Treasure and Trade Balances: The East India Company's Export Trade, 1660–1720," *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 21:3 [Dec. 1968]: 480–502). The chief reason for the difference between the Venetian and later English trades is that Europeans were better able to sell their merchandise, textiles especially, in the Levant and Ottoman Empires than they were in southern and eastern Asia.

Both sets of data certainly also prove the overwhelming importance of spices in their trades. For Venice, we can estimate that, in the 1490s, at least sixty to sixty-five percent of the value of their cargoes in the Levant trade was in the form of spices. But an important and growing share of Venetian imports was also in Syrian cotton, perhaps as much as 180,000 ducats out of 730,000 ducats (maximum estimates). That cotton was used to manufacture fustian textiles (mixed linen and cotton) in Italy and Germany—a very major growth industry in late medieval Europe. Similarly, in the English and Dutch East India import trades, a growing proportion, eventually superseding spices in importance, was in the form of new cotton textiles (calicoes and muslins) that created a veritable fashion revolution in Europe, displacing fustians and thereby providing the market foundations for the Industrial Revolution in cotton manufacturing.

The importance of precious metals for the spice trades thus indicates a somewhat different perspective from that offered in this book, an argument best exemplified (in my view) by the Eric Hobsbawm thesis on "The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century" (*Past and Present*, no. 5 [May 1954]: 33–53 and no. 6 [Nov. 1954]: 44–65): that the essence of "Old Colonialism"—i.e., the inauguration of European imperialism from Portugal's 1415 conquest of Ceuta in North Africa—was the medieval lure of both gold and spices. In his discussion of Portugal's African explorations, colonial acquisitions, and trade after 1415, Freedman does indicate the importance of gold in those expeditions and correctly notes that they initially resulted in a far greater importation of gold than of spices, by value. Freedman also notes that the acquisition of African pepper, now known as Malaguetta but then better known as "grains of paradise," came to be far less important than the growing quantities of sugar exported from their various colonial plantations in the Atlantic and West African islands. Several sources consulted indicate that the Portuguese imported about seventeen metric tons of gold from West Africa into Europe, from ca. 1470 to ca. 1500, and another nineteen metric tons from 1500 to 1550, with a peak flow in the 1550s. By that time, they had found gold in greater quantities in especially Brazil (from 1500) and Mozambique (from 1505).

Two explanations for the importance of gold in the Portuguese explorations may be offered to supplement Freedman's exposition. First, medieval Europe had long depended upon Africa for much of its gold supplies, whose major sources were located in the Upper Niger, Upper Senegal, and Upper Volta rivers, within the territory of the vast Muslim Mali Empire. Those gold supplies, via Italian trade, evidently diminished with the disintegration of that empire in the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries (and its replacement by the weaker Songhai Empire). The Portuguese thus sought to reestablish that influx, by a direct sea route, at the very time that the late medieval "bullion famines" had become severe.

Second, as demonstrated in the analysis of Venetian trade with the Levant and English trade with South Asia, Europeans never had any choice but to offer precious metals in exchange for spices and other Asian luxury goods. Surely, the greatest importance of the vast quantities of New World silver that the Spanish provided in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the Portuguese Brazilian gold in the eighteenth century, was in financing Western Europe's expansion in the new global trades, especially with Asia.

According to Hobsbawm's famous "General Crisis" thesis (not mentioned in this book), the crisis of "Old Colonialism" was produced by steeply rising, war-induced transaction costs and diminishing profit margins in the struggle to control the global trade in spices and precious metals. This inevitably led to the far more "productive" "New Colonialism" (which Hobsbawm saw as an essential foundation of the British industrial revolution): an economy based on the mass production, mass distribution, and mass consumption of "new" colonial products, such as sugar, coffee, tea, tobacco, and cotton calicoes. What Hobsbawm neglected to observe (or clearly indicate) was that the most important new colonial commodity was a medieval spice: sugar, whose cultivation the Portuguese had spread to their new Atlantic possessions of Madeira, the Azores, and then to the coastal West African islands of Fernando Po, Principé, and São Tomé, and finally to Brazil. Hobsbawm also neglected to observe that the Portuguese had done so principally during his era of so-called "Old Colonialism." Subsequently, in the era of "New Colonialism," the Spanish, and then the English, French, and Dutch created even vaster new sugar plantations throughout the Caribbean. As is well known, the labor required for those plantations (and American tobacco and cotton plantations) came principally from West African slaves, an odious trade that the Portuguese did not invent but vastly augmented in introducing it into European globalized commerce.

The consequence of those economic changes was to convert commodities such as sugar, coffee, tea, and tobacco from high-priced luxuries into relatively cheap, mass-consumed commodities. Thus, in 1439, a master mason in London could have purchased only 0.50 lb of white sugar with his daily wage; in 1700, a master mason or carpenter in London could have acquired six times as much, 3.1 lb, with his daily wage. In Toronto today, a master carpenter can buy 204.65 lb or 92.828 kg of white sugar.

The role of sugar brings us to Freedman's final chapter, "The Rise and Fall of Spices," which explains why European demand for medieval spices waned, except for the perennially popular pepper—and sugar. Independent evidence on European foreign trade (not considered in this book), in particular the accounts of both the Dutch and English East India Companies, reveals that the relative importance of spices dramatically declined in favor of other commodities from the 1660s. In part, the answer lies in changes in culinary fashions and culture, and that decline took place almost two centuries before the advent of modern refrigeration. Freedman cites many recipes and tracts to illustrate this change, along with treatises displaying increasingly negative views toward the consumption of spices. In part, the transition can also be found in Europe's new fascination and desire for new Asian and New World substitutes. He notes, for example, that the mean annual consumption of sugar in England rose from 1 lb in Elizabethan times (1558–1603) to 8 lb in the 1720s, to 80 lb today. That growing demand was to a considerable extent promoted by the vastly increased consumption of two new beverages of Asian origin: tea and coffee. Freedman also concedes, however, that in Asia centuries of drinking such beverages did not impede Asian consumption of spices.

Possibly, by the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, one of the key attractions for medieval Europeans had disappeared. The East, now well explored and partly colonized, was no longer so exotic and mysterious, and no longer linked to Paradise.

In sum, even if some of my comments may appear to be criticisms, they should serve to enhance the vital importance of this excellent book in leading us to better understand how spices came to transform Europe and the world itself, from medieval to modern times.

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Tony Claydon. *Europe and the Making of England, 1660–1760*. (Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History.) New York: Cambridge University Press. 2007. Pp. x, 370. Cloth $95.00, paper $34.99.

Cambridge University Press has chosen to illustrate the latest in its series of studies of early modern Britain with the section of Jodocus de Vos's tapestry commemorating the Battle of Blenheim, which features the moment of triumph for an English army in Europe when a redcoat takes the fallen French colors. It is one of very few images of rank-and-file soldiery and one of an even smaller number that invest the soldier with simple human dignity. In similar vein, Tony Claydon introduces this timely, provocative, and controlled account with an anecdote, restoring the same dignity to prospective House of Commons' Speaker William Bromley, whose chances of office were detonated by the publication of a spoof edition of his travels on the continent. Within a narrative that covers a grand sweep and is extensively and impeccably researched and referenced are buried (and sometime not so hidden) personal and human touches.

Claydon's book is a study of English people's self- and European identification, in a period in which they had the focus of Hydra. Beginning with the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, England, and subsequently Britain, was to be ruled by a king who had lived most of his life in exile in France, then by his younger brother, a Roman Catholic convert who was ousted by Parliament and William of Orange. The resulting principle of "Protestant succession" would in due course be upheld by the German-speaking electors of Hanover. The mid-seventeenth-century upheavals had often consolidated and defined Englishness and a little-England xenophobia, but the period of England's history between 1660 and 1760 was about England coming to terms with its new role within Great Britain and Ireland. What was European conflict for James II and William III was a very British sectarian battle on the banks of the River Boyne for Whig propagandists. The Europeanism of William and the Georges affected Britain's ability to cohere society in its American empire. How would Claydon's book have looked if he had continued to an end date of 1776? One of the key ways in which we know about the social development of London, its inhabitants, and American trade and settlement in the early modern period is through the information provided by the "Four shillings in the Pound" assessment of 1694. This funded William's European wars.

The study is arranged thematically, with two very useful headings of a "confessional geography" and a "confessional chronology," followed by two chapters on the politics of England in Europe and of Europe in England. Compare the description of England that William Shakespeare placed in the mouth of John of Gaunt in *Richard II* with James Thompson's lyrics to *Rule, Britannia*. The former is a description of England, but also a constructed one: it is dependent on island status—"a precious stone, set in a silver sea"—but England's borders do not an island form. England here bears a facade of bravado in which the moat and wall are the island defenses that protect English siege mentality. By 1750 popular injunctions were for Britannia to rule the waves, so that while the seas that surrounded the island were once a moat to keep "Johnnie (popish) foreigner" out, they now provided a continuous coast of embarkation for thousands of British people to spread their ethos to farther shores. Whigs and Tories both formed rival constructions of Englishness and attacked their opponents for promoting foreign hegemony. In doing so, they formed a party-political system and a common-law code that were distinctively English, globally exported, beacons of liberty, and shamefully unedifying all at the same time. But although the common redcoat who appears on the cover of this volume may have