

Eco 201Y1: Economic History of Later Medieval and Early Modern Europe

Topic no. 11: The Inauguration of Age of Overseas Expansion: Maritime Explorations and the Establishment of the Portuguese and Spanish Empires, c. 1400 - 1600

A. General Readings:

1. Harry A. Miskimin, The Economy of Early Renaissance Europe, 1300-1460 (1969; reissued 1977), pp. 150-63; and The Economy of Later Renaissance Europe, 1460-1600 (CUP, 1977), pp. 123-35.
2. Thomas A. Brady, jr., Heiko O. Oberman, and James D. Tracy, eds., Handbook of European History, 1400-1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation, Vol. I: Structures and Assertions (Leiden/New York/Cologne: E.J. Brill, 1994). In particular:
 - a) John H. Munro, 'Patterns of Trade, Money, and Credit,' pp. 147-96.
 - b) Henry Kamen, 'The Habsburg Lands: Iberia,' pp. 467-98.
 - c) Wolfgang Reinhard, 'The Seaborne Empires,' pp. 637-64

B. Shipping and Navigation:

1. J.H. Parry, The Establishment of the European Hegemony, 1415 - 1715: Trade and Exploration in the Age of the Renaissance (New York, 1961): a revised version of Europe and a Wider World (New York, 1949), chapter 1: 'The Tools of the Explorers,' pp. 7-28; and J.H. Parry, The Age of Reconnaissance (Berkeley, 1963), Part I: 'The Conditions for Discovery,' pp. 1-130.
2. Carlo Cipolla, Guns, Sails, and Empires: Technological Innovation and the Early Phases of European Expansion, 1400 - 1700 (New York, 1965), pp. 75-103, 132-43.
3. Richard Unger, The Ship in the Medieval Economy, 600-1600 (London/Montreal, 1980), pp. 201-50; see also Richard Unger, 'Warships and Cargo Ships in Medieval Europe,' Technology and Culture, 22 (April 1981), 233 - 52.
4. Archibald Lewis and Timothy Runyan, European Naval and Maritime History, 300 - 1500 (Bloomington, 1985), pp. 143-69.
5. Russell Menard, 'Transport Costs and Long-Range Trade, 1300 - 1800: Was There a European 'Transport Revolution' in the Early Modern Era?' in James Tracy, ed., The Political Economy of Merchant Empires: State Power and World Trade, 1350 - 1750 (CUP, 1991), pp. 228 - 75.

C. Portugal and Spain, Africa, Asia, and the New World, 1400 - 1620

1. J.H. Parry, The Establishment of the European Hegemony, 1415 - 1715: Trade and Exploration in the Age of the Renaissance (New York, 1961): a revised version of Europe and a Wider World (New York, 1949), chapter 2, 'Christians and Spices,' pp. 29-43; J.H. Parry, The Age of Reconnaissance (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), chapter 8, 'Africa and the Indian Ocean,' pp. 131-45; chapter 9, 'The Atlantic and the South Sea,' pp. 146-61; chapter 10: 'The American Conquests,' pp. 162-76; chapter 12: 'New Routes to the East,' pp. 177-89, chapter 14: 'The Land Empire of Spain,' pp. 227-41; chapter 15: 'The Sea Empires of Portugal and Holland,' pp. 242-57.
2. Ralph Davis, The Rise of the Atlantic Economies (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), chapter 1: 'The Portuguese in the Atlantic,' pp. 1-14; and chapters 3, 4, 5, 9 10 (on Spain).
3. Frederic Lane, 'Pepper Prices Before Da Gama,' The Journal of Economic History, 28 (1968), 590-

- 97; and Frederic Lane, 'The Mediterranean Spice Trade: Its Revival in the Sixteenth Century,' The American Historical Review, 45 (1940), 581-90, reprinted in his Venice and History: The Collected Papers of Frederic C. Lane (Baltimore, 1966), pp. 23-34.
4. Wake, C.H.H., 'The Changing Pattern of Europe's Pepper and Spice Imports, ca 1400-1700,' Journal of European Economic History, 8:2 (Fall 1979), 361-403; and Peter Musgrave, 'The Economics of Uncertainty: The Structural Revolution in the Spice Trade, 1480 - 1640,' in P.L. Cottrell and D.H. Aldcroft, eds., Shipping, Trade, and Commerce: Essays in Memory of Ralph Davis (Leicester, 1981).
 5. Philip D. Curtin, Cross-Cultural Trade in World History, Studies in Comparative World History (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), chapters 2, 3, 7.
 6. Ivana Elbl, 'Cross-Cultural Trade and Diplomacy: Portuguese Relations with West Africa, 1441 - 1521,' The Journal of World History, 3 (1992), 165 - 204; and Ivana Elbl, 'The Volume of the Early Atlantic Slave Trade, 1444-1521,' The Journal of African History, 37 (1996), 31-75.
 7. K. N. Chaudhuri, Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750 (CUP, 1985), chapter 3: 'The Portuguese Seaborne Empire,' pp. 63-79.
 8. Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Luis Filipe F. R. Thomas, 'Evolution of Empire: The Portuguese in the Indian Ocean during the Sixteenth Century,' in James Tracy, ed., The Political Economy of Merchant Empires: State Power and World Trade, 1350 - 1750 (CUP, 1991), pp. 298 - 332.
 9. James Vicens Vives and Jorge Nadal Oller, An Economic History of Spain, trans. by F. Lopez-Morilles (Princeton, 1969).

QUESTIONS:

1. What particular factors -- economic, social, cultural, political/military -- led or inspired Western Europeans, and especially Iberians, to engage in overseas explorations, discoveries, and then colonizations from the early fifteenth century? How important were relations and conflicts with the Islamic (Muslim) world in Iberia and North Africa in the processes of overseas Iberian expansion? What role did the Iberian Reconquista play in these processes in particular?
2. What advances in shipbuilding, maritime navigation, and cartography made possible and promoted the new age of Overseas Expansion, from the early fifteenth century? What was the Atlantic ship?
3. Why in particular was the small, economically underdeveloped (or 'backward') nation of Portugal the first, as a nation, to engage in overseas exploration, expansion, and colonization? Explain the events that led the Portuguese to discover a sea route to explore, trade with, and colonize parts of West Africa in the 15th century? Explain the importance of the following in Portuguese explorations, trade, and colonization: gold, spices, sugar, and slaves.
4. How did the Portuguese establish their Empire in the Indian Ocean, and how did they seek to gain control over the Asian spice trades? Why did they fail in this attempt, and how did they come to lose their Indian Ocean Empire: in particular to the Dutch and the English?
5. How did the Americas come to be divided between Spain and Portugal -- and in particular why did the Portuguese colonize Brazil? What was the importance of Brazil for the west European economy?
6. Discuss the importance of sugar in the economic development of the Atlantic and Caribbean islands and of Brazil during the 16th and 17th centuries. What was the importance of sugar in Spanish, Portuguese, and European commerce during the 16th and 17th centuries?