

turned into nation-states, this process was extremely tortuous and often not derived from nationalist movements.

Ultimately, empires and nation-states, as two forms of domination, were not opposed in both concept and practice but were highly prone to intersections and overlaps. Pure nation-states are not common in reality, and many who claim to be nation-states have imperial characteristics. Many empires have accommodated diverse ethnic groups throughout their long history until they were acknowledged as »transformed« into nation-states by modern fusion into a dominant nation.

This book resembles a literature review that concentrates on key research on empires. The language is lively, but it is highly academic. Its target audience should not only be interested in imperial studies but also familiar with the historical background knowledge of empires, otherwise certain sections may come across as tedious and challenging to grasp. As I progressed through the chapters, I could feel a strangeness and helplessness hit me as I read the chapter on Ottomans due to my limited knowledge of Ottoman history. But as I delved into the chapters on the British and the French that I know better, I read more smoothly, and feel that I have absorbed a lot of new knowledge, which is endlessly memorable. Therefore, I think this book may not be suitable for readers who are only interested in the study of empires but have not yet begun to understand the history of empires.

Generally, the various empires have certainly left their marks on the world, and if we're going to understand that world, we need to understand how empires worked. And *Visions of Empires* must be the best choice for you. It is a grand and refreshing view and analysis of how the rulers of the five great powers envisioned their empires across centuries of history. I highly recommend this book, especially to those who are its target audience, and I bet you will gain a lot of new ideas and knowledge in Kumar's *Visions of Empires*, which will be very useful for your study of the empire.

LIANG Conying

EVOLUTION OF THE FIRST GLOBAL EMPIRE – ROGER CROWLEY »CONQUERORS« BOOK REVIEW²

Had there been more of the world, the Portuguese explorers would have discovered it.

--Luís Vaz de Camões³

In August 1415, a fleet of ships sailed across the Strait of Gibraltar, attacked and occupied the Moroccan Muslim port of Ceuta, unveiling the prologue of continued maritime expansion. Ceuta was the most fortified and strategic fortress in the entire Mediterranean at that time, and its fall undoubtedly shocked the European world. People were questioning: who has such fierce ambition and brutal means? The answer is a small country with only 1million population at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the first conqueror of marine -- Portugal.

Conquerors (2015) is written by Roger Crowley, a British historian and author, talented in telling the history of maritime and Mediterranean world. Crowley is known for his »Mediterranean Epic Trilogy«, which includes *Constantinople: The Last Great Siege/1453* (2005), *Empire of the Seas* (2008), and *City of Fortune*(2011). *Conquerors* is Crowley's newest work, details the early Portuguese activities in the Indian Ocean, and the evolution of the Portuguese Empire.

Based on the contents of the book, we can perhaps summarize the four main motivations for Portugal's overseas expansion: the crusading zeal to fight the Muslims, the pursuit of the spices in the Orient, the thirst for Guinean gold, and the chase after the kingdom of John the Priest. Portugal was

² Roger Crowley, *Conquerors: How Portugal Forged the First Global Empire*, New York: Random House, 2015, ISBN: 9780812994018.

³ Note: Luís Vaz de Camões, a portuguese poet, created the epic poem *The Lusads* in 1572, which is more than 9,000 lines long, describing the Portuguese navigator Da Gama's successful voyage around the southern tip of Africa to the Oriental India, supported by Zeus and Venus.

poor in natural resources, peripheral to the political and economic hubs of Europe, therefore, the lure of the East was irresistible for it. More importantly, Portuguese believed that there is a powerful Christian monarch, John the Priest, who resides somewhere far beyond the barriers posed by the Islamic world. In order to defend »the sanctity of the House of the Portuguese Crown«, they have to join forces with John and exterminate the infidels. This old aggressive Christian dream is rooted in each plan of the Portuguese empire's colonial expansion.

As Portugal's commercial empire grew, an important trade route developed within the Portuguese empire from Lisbon, southward through Madeira, Cape Verde and the Azores, and eventually westward to Brazil in South America. This transatlantic route established an early modern Atlantic trade network, based on the African slave trade and the Brazilian plantation and sugar industries.¹ While developing the Atlantic Islands and the West African trade network, the Portuguese continued to explore southward along the West African coast, without losing sight of the ultimate goal of opening up new routes to the Orient. In the year 1495, Manuel I ascended to the throne, and continued to support seafaring explorations and in the September, 1499, Da Gama succeeded his voyage, opened up the new shipping route from Portugal to India, from Western Europe to the Orient. Moreover, the Portuguese linked the emerging Atlantic Ocean trade with the ancient Indian Ocean trade through the Cape of Good Hope route, establish a close commercial relationship.

In April-May every year, Portuguese ships carrying Flemish bells, wine, Indian cotton cloth, etc. sailed from Goa, exchanged for spices and precious stones in Cochin, and then traveled to Malacca, where they sold the cotton cloth, etc., and got cloves and nutmeg. »It is forty days' sail from Calicut with a good will...all cloves come from there.« Then to Macao, exchanging spices for Chinese silk. In June-August of the following year, they traveled to Japan by the southwest monsoon and exchanged silk for silver. The trade products grew so rich that the voyagers even gave an elephant to the Pope as a gift. Gold and silver flowed through the Atlantic and Indian Oceans as the routes expanded, eventually leading to global economic exchanges. In Crowley's telling, Japanese painters portrayed Westerners in their paintings, and China was able to demonstrate its new form of soft power in trade. In addition to economic exchanges, Christian culture and colonial systems spread along the routes. Manuel I attempted to spread the Christian faith throughout the world and recover the lost Holy Land for Christendom. It was a political-economic, religious, and cultural expansion.

Conquerors contains an important perspective -- colonization is a double-edged sword, in either politico-economic or cultural way. »The Portuguese initiated endless global interactions, both benign and malignant.« The discovery of the route around the Horn of Africa to India was a great breakthrough in the history of navigation, but it also heralded a complete disruption of the world order. There is no doubt that through the unremitting efforts of Da Gama and others, mankind has a further understanding of the unknown world. In addition, the economical exchange of human society was promoted, the spice trade began by the Portuguese Empire drove the flow of gold and silver, laying the foundation for economic globalization. The trade policies utilized by the Portuguese were followed and developed by colonial powers such as the Netherlands and Great Britain, profoundly influencing early modern trade system. After the trade port to further penetrate and control the inland areas to replace Portugal and dominate the maritime trade, the Dutch better developed the Portuguese trade monopoly, following by the United Kingdom and other countries.

Nevertheless, for the indigenous people of India and Africa, colonization is a completely disastrous nightmare. As Steven A. Pinker described, slave trade is »the most inhumane chapter in human history.« The European's strong ships and cannons brought humiliation and resignation, and the indigenous people are almost powerless to fight back. The mass deaths of Indians from diseases brought by the colonizers, such as smallpox and dysentery, made it impossible for them to meet the requirements of the Europeans to develop plantations and sugar manufacturing. This led the colonizers to seek more slaves to satisfy their economic ambitions. Additionally, for the Muslims trading in the Indian peninsula, it was

¹ A. J. R. Russell-Wood, *The Portuguese Empire: 1415-1808*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998, p.139.

even more tragic. The greatest desire of the Portuguese king was to blockade the Red Sea, and expelled the Muslims, but in fact the Muslims were actually arrived earlier for trade. The arrival of Christians, for the Muslims, is a disaster. Looking back through history, religious conflict may have laid the hidden danger as early as five hundred years ago.

To highlight, Crowley perfectly uses his advantage as a historian in writing *Conquerors*, his well-placed academic research with writer's delicate brushwork, creating an fascinating result. Based on the tradition of chronicles, he detailed the voyages of Dias and Da Gama, the battles and conquests of Almeida and Albuquerque through narrative techniques. Crowley not only did a great job of laying the facts, but also tied characters' plots with the lifeblood of the Portuguese Empire. All of these made the book deep and readable.

»Such images, impressions, and trades left a huge and long-lasting influence on the culture, food, flora, art, history, languages, and genes of the planet.²«Portuguese created the prototype for European colonial expansion and Laid the foundation for the the Atlantic trade network, beginning the five hundred years of Western domination of the world. They pried up closed seas and broke the system of self-sufficiency in closed areas, and their persistence and perseverance built the First Global Empire, connected the world through sea power. Unfortunately, the conqueror of the sea ultimately failed to conquer the world. As »Portugal is very poor and when the poor are covetous they become oppressors³«, the great colonial empire could not escape the fate of being devoured by desire, and gradually fell down.

WANG Wenxin

META REMEC, ED. GOZD IN LJUDJE – RAZMERJA IN ZGODOVINA (FOREST AND PEOPLE – RELATIONS AND HISTORY). LJUBLJANA: INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY HISTORY, 2023, 362 PAGES.

The new issue of the *Vpogledi/Perspicacités* collection of the Institute of Contemporary History, titled *Gozd in ljudje – razmerja in zgodovina* (Forest and People – Relations and History), is based on the scientific symposium titled *Gozd in človek* (Forest and People), which took place at the Institute of Contemporary History in Ljubljana in March 2022. The volume comprises thirteen contributions addressing the multifaceted relationship between forest ecosystems and people. The monograph focuses on the importance of forests for people's lives and social history, as well as on the changing attitudes towards them. The authors use new approaches to studying forests and environmental history in general, while the interdisciplinary approach allows for a holistic view of forests as an ecosystem.

In the first contribution, Alenka Kačičnik Gabrič analyses the history of forest management in the present-day Slovenian territory. The author examines the complex relationships and rights shaping forest exploitation and presents the challenges faced by landowners and easement holders. Easements represented an essential part of the economy, allowing peasants who did not own any woodland to obtain special permission from the owners of forests, which they could then exploit for their household and economic needs. Among the presented easements, the author pays special attention to a particular example, the so-called »right to flowers«. In addition to the right to high-mountain grazing, the latter also included the right to erect a wooden building on the landowner's pasture for living and sleeping during the grazing season. Peasants rarely invested in land that was not part of their farms. Instead, they wanted to profit as much as possible from their easement rights, thus often leaving the land impoverished. In this context, by presenting conflicts over the use of forests and timber, the author explores a number of disputes and legal disagreements arising from the manner of forest exploitation, regulation, and purchase by the state.

² Roger Crowley, *Conquerors: How Portugal Forged the First Global Empire*, New York: Random House, 2015, p.304.

³ Sanceau, Elaine, *Indies Adventure*, London, 1936. p.286.

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