

Malyn Newitt. *Navigations: The Portuguese Discoveries of the Renaissance*. London, UK: Reaktion Books, www.reaktionbooks.co.uk, 2023. 351 pp., illustrations, maps, glossary, notes, bibliography, index. UK £25.00, cloth: ISBN 978-1-78914-702-5.

Malyn Newitt's *Navigations* focuses on the role of the Portuguese maritime explorers from the fifteenth century through what is known as the voyages of discovery, advances in ship design and navigation knowledge. The Avis dynasty established itself between 1385 and 1460 when maritime explorations reached their first stage of development of the west African coast in the second half of the fifteenth century. This ultimately led to Portuguese involvement in the lucrative but reprehensible slave trade. These expeditions included famous names in voyaging history such as Prince Henry "The Navigator," Vasco de Gama, Pedro Alvares Cabral, Duarte Pacheco Pereira, Amerigo Vespucci and, finally, Ferdinand Magellan. Their ventures are covered in detail along with their many human failings.

One chapter of Newitt's book centers upon the influence of the often under-appreciated royal women in these discoveries and, of special note, the Muslims and particularly Jews (Sephardim and New Christians or *conversos*) who affected both scientific undertakings and the subsequent success of Portuguese commerce. One Jew, cartographer Jácomo de Maiorca, was included in Lisbon's Monument to the Discoveries. This Jewish diaspora was vital in the great economic influence of the Portuguese. However, without an accepted international currency, a bizarre barter system developed such as a horse could be worth an arbitrary number of African slaves. Also, a consequence of sailing for long periods of time away from land was malnutrition, most frequently "the scurvy," a disease that caused fever, rotting teeth, bleeding gums, general weakness and, if untreated, death.

Newitt relates the history of the more famous Portuguese explorers placing them within the context of real people with human flaws. The first was Infante Henrique, better known as Henry the Navigator. He was neither a geographer nor a mathematician and did not introduce navigational skills to his followers. Henry was peripherally responsible for exploration of the islands of the west coast of Africa, but he was considered rash, blood-thirsty and careless about administrative details. His main contribution was the establishment of a center at Ceuta on the north African coast. The author argues that Henry became famous based upon a myth that he founded an academy of navigation and mathematics at the small Algarve town of Sagres where leading scholars of the day were trained as navigators. Yet on Lisbon's Monument to the Discoveries commemorating Portugal's age of exploration, he is the lead statue-figure in the riverfront memorial ... perhaps a national epoch in search of a hero?

The book has chapters largely devoted to da Gama, Magellan, Cabral, Cao, Dias, Zarco and Teixeira, Vespucci, and Pereira, many of which chapters shed light upon the myths that have been generated about those men over four centuries. Cao is depicted as one of history's heroic adventurers, roughly mapping approximately 2000 miles of the west African coastline and exploring the Zaire River by sailing almost 100 uncharted miles inland. Yet he is presented as more of an entrepreneur than a methodical plotter of scientific information. Cao and Bartolomeu Dias were somewhat typical of the early Portuguese navigators as minor members of the royal entourage but without any distinguished parentage. Although not especially learned, they knew how to use the primitive navigational instruments of the day and made charts of their discoveries. Da Gama embodied the culture and ideology of the vanishing past by displaying violence and recklessness during his bold voyages. Yet da Gama's first voyage and the subsequent voyage of Cabral, in which the coasts of Africa were explored and mapped, greatly contributed to geographic knowledge. Cabral went on to discover the coast of South America and Brazil. This led to the Treaty of Tordesillas, which divided newly discovered lands between Portugal and Spain (Castile). This unfortunately produced violent political conflicts that projected European power and saw rulers competing for social control over indigenous populations, often by brutal attempt to quell potential threats. Pereira produced a detailed map guide for navigators sailing the coast of Africa, but these charts, in turn, made it easy for those who followed to engage in the shameful business of slavery. It was claimed the Africans they encountered were cannibals, and therefore less than human – black commodities. Finally, circumnavigator Magellan is depicted as an unsympathetic character. To maintain the discipline needed to assert his leadership and dominance, he was quite cruel to his men. These many exploratory voyages failed to reach boundary agreements due to the inability to accurately calculate longitude before the invention of an accurate chronometer.

An unusual but important chapter is “Portuguese Royal Women in the Age of Discovery.” The women of the Avis Dynasty played central roles in political affairs. They were the mothers of princes, advisors to their royal husbands, and settlers of claims made during disputed rules of succession. Most importantly, their arranged marriages created alliances and resolved international disputes to bring peace, such as the 1449 internecine conflict. (Of interest, Queen Philippa was given a place alongside the great navigators and conquistadors on the iconic Monument to Discoveries.)

The author notes that these explorations had a secondary effect of spreading of flora and fauna that changed the native ecosystems of many places and spread human, animal and plant diseases. Portuguese explorers encountered

the endemic diseases common among some African tribes. Ironically, the African natives who were exploited as slaves generally fared better with these novel diseases, which was not the case for the indigenous civilizations in America.

Finally, the influence of the discoveries changed classical writings that circulated across Europe. New information derived from genuine experiences challenged and gradually replaced the folklore and some religious traditional beliefs that led to the Portuguese Renaissance, Newitt's recurrent underlying theme.

Navigations: The Portuguese Discoveries of the Renaissance is a highly rewarding but at times a challenging read with the appearance of many unfamiliar Portuguese terms. Fortunately, the book's glossary is helpful. A rigorously scholarly work, it recounts the most important portion of Portuguese maritime history while exposing many myths that have been propagated by them in a historical context and modern perspective. This reviewer recommends Newitt's book to all historians interested in this dynamic period of discovery.

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Matthew Richardson. *Manxmen at Sea in the Age of Nelson, 1760-1815*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen & Sword Maritime, www.pen-and-sword.co.uk, 2024. viii+168 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. UK £22.00, US \$42.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-39904-449-3. (E-book available.)

Thanks to its geographical position off the coast of England, the Isle of Man was well suited to be a haven for skilled seafaring men operating in both legal and extralegal capacities. Matthew Richardson seeks to analyze this plethora of seafaring talent in the context of the Age of Nelson and the scientific and military expansion of the British Empire. By the 1750s, the vast majority of the Manx, as they are properly called, drew their livings from the sea and its trades in some fashion. For some, this took the form of fishing for herring in the Irish Sea, where weather and tide constantly tested a sailor's worth, while others engaged in the merchant trade, both legal and illegal. On the proper side of the law, Manxmen were well regarded within the triangle trade and, as such, were frequently sought out by Liverpool traders for their Guineamen as crew and shipmasters.

Conversely, the precarious waterways of Liverpool and Morecambe Bays and Solway Firth provided ample opportunity for Manxmen to use their sailing skills as smugglers to avoid the taxes of the British crown. In turn, British Navy officials were frequently posted to the island with hopes that they could,