

Ce dernier chapitre est le plus directement et le plus explicitement relié à la thèse de l'auteur. Les fils tendus précédemment pour expliquer telle ou telle position théorique ou réalisation pratique se rejoignent de manière à illustrer ce phénomène de prise et de conservation du pouvoir institutionnel dans la Cité des sciences humaines. L'auteur décrit tout d'abord les assises institutionnelles du groupe : dans un premier temps les *Annales* et la VI^e section de l'École pratique des hautes études, et par après l'Université comme telle, l'édition et les médias. Il met bien en relief comment ceux qui s'identifient au groupe s'appuient mutuellement, qui, pour une position importante, une publication dans une collection à grand tirage, tel autre par un compte rendu favorable dans une revue prestigieuse ou à la télévision. L'auteur examine ensuite quelques « aspects » de cette « position hégémonique » : l'éclatement inévitable qui découle de l'importance numérique même du groupe, de la diversité des intérêts et des nuances méthodologiques qu'il accueille, de l'étendue des ramifications institutionnelles où ses fidèles déploient leur activité; le fait que les historiens des *Annales* se soient approprié une position dominante non seulement au plan de la production historique scientifique et érudite mais aussi à celui des ouvrages de vulgarisation et des manuels scolaires. Dans la troisième partie du chapitre, il explique comment le groupe, comme tous ceux qui vivent une histoire analogue, a tendance à reconstruire sa propre histoire en dévalorisant ces prédécesseurs, en excluant, plus souvent qu'autrement par le silence, les opposants et les infidèles, et en récupérant ceux dont l'importance scientifique et culturelle des travaux nuirait à l'image du groupe s'ils n'en étaient pas. Le cas le plus fameux, à cet égard, étant celui de Philippe Ariès, l'historien des mentalités, que les historiens des *Annales* se sont annexés après l'avoir ignoré, voire dédaigné.

Les exemples cités sont assez nombreux, les relations entre les différents éléments de la thèse suffisamment claires pour convaincre le lecteur qu'il existe un phénomène social et culturel manifeste qui identifie le mouvement de la Nouvelle Histoire et caractérise l'activité de ses protagonistes; et que ce phénomène en est un tout autant de production théorique et pratique probante et significative relative au passé humain que d'accaparement du pouvoir et de l'influence dans les institutions, ce qui l'apparente à des phénomènes sociologiques analogues de mouvement social dominant.

Au plan méthodologique, on est toutefois dans l'ordre d'une hypothèse plausible, d'une manière défendable de se représenter et d'expliquer les choses, et non d'une théorie qu'une confrontation méthodique au réel aurait permis de confirmer. Mais c'est là le lot des sciences humaines dès lors qu'elles s'occupent d'historicité, de l'évolution des activités humaines, de leur enchaînement et de leur signification, vers un futur indéterminé. Même, comme c'est le cas ici, quand la démonstration emprunte son modèle de référence à la science politique, elle reste prisonnière des contraintes d'un objet saisissable certes, mais indéterminable parce qu'indéterminé.

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G. V. SCAMMELL — *The World Encompassed: The First European Maritime Empires c. 800 - 1650*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982. Pp. xiv, 538.

The World Encompassed is made up of nine chapters. The first describes Norse expansion over the seas of Northern Europe and the North Atlantic. The last chapter is about England. Between are chapters on the German Hanse cities, Venice, Genoa, Portugal, Spain,

Holland and France — in that order. “Empire” here is used loosely and figuratively, covering a multiplicity of sins — and virtues? — which come with the exercise of power, influence, domination, even mere presence overseas. Although contrasts and parallels are suggested, for example between the individualistic and highly-decentralized Genoese imperial system and the formal and tightly-knit Venetian Empire, there is no express analysis of political structures as such nor, for that matter, social and economic. The narrator seldom comes down to comment on the meaning of the evidence.

Overwhelmingly the nine chapters of this book are narrative, skillfully pieced together from a considerable secondary literature available in these fields. All chapters are remarkable for richness of historical detail and colour. It is these latter qualities which lend freshness and originality to the treatment of such old and thoroughly-worked themes as the Venetian Republic or Portuguese overseas expansion. In some instances special attention is given to neglected subjects. Historians have long recognized the conquest and settlement of the Atlantic Islands — the Canary, the Madeira, Cap Verde, Azores, Saõ Tome — as a first important step in overseas expansion. But then, always a problem with surveys, the history of the islands is lost sight of in the great sweep of continental discoveries and circumnavigations. Without losing track of the larger picture Scammell has managed to convey a more memorable and graphic impression of this phase of expansion: the size and ethnicity of original populations, miscegenation and changing racial composition of populations, impact of racial composition on political development, changing commodity composition of production (sugar, wheat, wine, wood, wool, meat) in the context of the shifting relationship with first Europe, then Europe-Africa, then Europe-Africa-America. In other instances the old and well-established story line is infused with richer, more colourful and suggestive detail. The Venetian Arsenal with its two to three thousand workers, its ability to take a war galley from storage and put it to sea fully equipped and armed in an hour is described, as is the Genoese citizen living in fifteenth century Caffa (in the Crimea) at ease among Moslems, married to oriental women, and living an orientalized life eased and enriched by such ungodly luxuries as baths and fountains. Throughout the book there is a *leitmotiv*, touching the sensual at times, of the sexual attractions and relations of the different races.

Little of the detail which Scammell has drawn together is original; it does, however, effectively reflect the considerable scholarship in many languages of the last thirty years or so. It also should be said of Scammell’s narrative that it skilfully weaves contemporary idiom, reportage and opinion into the text with the result that there is a strong sense of historical presence and immediacy. Even those well read in the areas of European overseas expansion will find something rewarding in Scammell’s chapters.

Three chapters are of special interest. Those on “The Hanse” and “The Genoese Republic” are especially welcome because they constitute up-to-date, relatively detailed and self-contained histories of two areas of considerable historical significance but for which there have relatively few satisfactory accounts in English.

On the other hand, the chapters on “The Norse” and again “The Hanse” effectively broaden and integrate the account of European expansion. From a reading of the first chapter it is clear that the Norse succeeded in organizing, admittedly in a loose and tentative way, the space of the North Atlantic. Voyages to the Shetlands, Falklands, Iceland, Greenland, perhaps even America, were repeated and not random. Migration was purposive and exchange, sustained by war, piracy, trade, or all three was extended far to the west and north. The demands of this trade — in hides, timber, fish, iron, silver, ivory, furs of fox, sable, bear, ermine — produced new commercial centres from Limerick on the Shannon and Cork in Ireland to Novgorod and Kiev on the Dnepr in Russia. The Swedish migration and conquest eastward carried the Norse to the very portals of the middle- and far-eastern exchange systems. Through this eastern link monetary metals flowed to Northwest Europe providing for further trade and a more intensive network of relations and possibly the monetary revival of Europe in the tenth century. Within the more strictly European portion of this vast network more

clearly imperial links operated in the form of the Danegeld, a levy tantamount to regular taxation, by payment of which the French, English and others bought off Viking raiders.

To be sure the far-western extension of Norse dominion to Greenland and America was broken in the later fourteenth century, and the specific contribution of this Atlantic expansion to that of the English and French in the fifteenth century has been uncertain.

But in the seas linking the whole region from Iceland to Northern Europe and Russia the Norse "reconnaissance" became the basis for a permanent network of commercial, political and demographic ties. These ties were multiplied and intensified by the German Hanse cities of the late Middle Ages to the point where "...By the sixteenth century Baltic settlement and expansion had called into being a trade of major proportions employing a volume of shipping equalling the total owned in the Mediterranean (c. 350,000 t)." The ability of the Hanse cities to accomplish this in no small measure reflected the fact that they first fit into the Norse exchange pattern, took up trade in commodities the Norse made known, and moved into those trading areas and trading posts first established and worked up by the Norse. The process of early exchange among the pagans and Slavs of the wilds of Northern and Eastern Europe calls to mind the experience three centuries later in the early trade with the Americas; it is thus that the experience of medieval Europe is drawn into a tighter relationship with that of Mediterranean Europe of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries but also revealed as an integral, though early, part of the historical process by which Britain, France and Holland expanded into the Atlantic.

There is another important thematic parallel between the medieval expansion of Northern Europe and the later trans-Atlantic expansion of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries — the German eastward migration and colonization. In the massive peasant settlement east of the Elbe and into Silesia this experience was markedly different from that of the Spanish or Portuguese colonization of New Spain or Brazil. In other instances the parallels are close. In Livonia, Estonia and Courland minority German populations settled in predominantly Slavic and pagan areas but only in the trading centres which were key to organizing and controlling the surrounding countryside. In the countryside Germans were never or only occasionally found. This was also to be the case with the Spanish in many parts of America later. The organizer of German colonization, the *locator* or *bezitzer*, was very close in his function to the Genoese colonial companies or the Portuguese *donatorios*. Lubeck, parallel in its interests and functions to Seville and Castile, backed with ships loaded with arms and foodstuffs attempts to settle Livonia. Here conquest and settlement were closely related to solidifying and developing an already existing commercial pattern in a region of risk but also of strategic importance. The pagan and Slavic-speaking people of East Europe were in many respects as foreign and strange to the Christians of thirteenth-century Germany as the Amerindians were to be to the Spanish. As later, conversion to Christianity and colonization proceeded apace; but also, as later, with the *Reconquista*, Germany had the experience of the conversion and conquest of an internal frontier, Austria and Saxony, before moving to the more distant conversion of Livonians, Slavs and Prussians.

G. V. Scammell has written a book in an area of enduring interest and significance. It is rich in historical detail and colour. It is a pleasure to read. Better than any other survey in English of overseas expansion, it succeeds in linking the Norse and Hanse maritime achievements to the later global expansion. There are parts of this book where the volume and persistence of detail is overwhelming and one wonders about the point. The worst consequence of this feature is that it makes the work less accessible to the general reader or the student of an undergraduate history course. It is a rich diet.

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