LECTURE 12: Foundations of the European Miracle

HISTORY 1130: Themes in Global History: Trade, Economy, and Empires

Dr. Jari Eloranta
Professor of Comparative Economic and Business History
Appalachian State University, Department of History
Office: Anne Belk Hall, 249S (Office hours: see syllabus)
Phone: 262-6006
E-mail: elorantaj@appstate.edu
http://www.appstate.edu/~elorantaj

European Renaissance and Italian City States

Renaissance: Introduction
Renaissance Art and Culture
Florence
Venice
Economic Revival
LECTURE 12: Foundations of the European Miracle

RENAISSANCE: INTRODUCTION:

The Italian Renaissance of the 15th century represented a reconnection of the west with classical antiquity, the absorption of knowledge—particularly mathematics—from Arabic (which had its origins in Hindu India), the focus on the importance of living well in the present (e.g. Renaissance humanism), and an explosion of the dissemination of knowledge brought on by printing. In addition the creation of new techniques in art, poetry, and architecture led in turn to a radical change in the style and substance of the arts and letters. The Italian Renaissance was often labeled as the beginning of the “modern” epoch (although this is often doubted and debated among historians).


LECTURE 12: Foundations of the European Miracle

The Italian Renaissance was intertwined with the intellectual movement known as Renaissance humanism and with the fiercely independent and combative urban societies of the city-states of central and northern Italy in the 13th to 16th centuries. Florence, Italy was the birthplace of the Renaissance for several reasons.

The first two or three decades of the 15th century saw the emergence of a rare cultural efflorescence, particularly in Florence. This ‘Florentine Enlightenment’ (Holmes) was a major achievement. It was a classical culture which sought to live up to the republican ideals of Athens and Rome. Sculptors used Roman models and classical themes. This society had a new relationship with its classical past. It felt it owned it and revived it. Florentines felt akin to 1st century BC republican Rome. Rucellai wrote that he belonged to a great age; Leonardo Bruni’s Panegyric to the City of Florence expresses similar sentiments. There was a genuine appreciation of the plastic arts—pagan idols and statuary—with nudity and expressions of human dignity. Painting took huge leaps forward in development from the works of Giotto through Fra Angelico, Masaccio, Masolino, Piero della Francesca and many others.
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For further discussion, see e.g.:
http://www.learner.org/exhibits/renaissance/
http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/glo/renaissance/it.html
http://witcombe.sbc.edu/ARTHrenaissanceitaly.html
http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Lit/ren.html

Donatello, *Pazzi Madonna*, c. 1422, marble, 74.5 x 69.5 cm, Bodemuseum, Berlin. See a Donatello site [text in Italian].

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RENAISSANCE ART AND CULTURE:

Early Renaissance:
Artists born before 1470, including the works of Fra Angelico (Guido di Pietro da Mugello) (Italian, 1387-1455), Donatello (Italian, 1386-1466), Antonio Pisanello (Italian, before 1395-1455?), Giovanni Bellini (Italian, 1430?-1516), Sandro Botticelli (Italian, c. 1445-1510), Domenico Ghirlandaio (Italian, 1449-1494), Sebastiano Mainardi (Italian, 1450-1513), Leonardo da Vinci (Italian, 1452-1519), and Tilmann Riemenschneider (German, c. 1460-1531).

Later Renaissance:
Artists born after 1469, including Albrecht Dürer (German, 1471-1528), Michelangelo Buonarroti (Italian, 1475-1564), Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio) (Italian, 1483-1520), Titian (Tiziano Vecellio) (Italian [Venetian], c. 1485/90-1576), Tintoretto (Jacopo Robusti) (Italian [Venetian], 1518-1594), and Giambologna (Giovanni da Bologna) (Italian, 1529-1608):

http://www.artlex.com/ArtLex/rr/renaissance.html
Brunelleschi's Dome
Filippo Brunelleschi, the foremost architect of the Early Renaissance, lost the competition for the commission for the north door of the Baptistery to Ghiberti. In 1417 he bested Ghiberti for the commission to build a dome for the Florentine Cathedral. Between 1420 and 1436 he built a drum—a vertical supporting wall—on the existing 138-foot-diameter octagonal cross of the cathedral. He then assembled the dome on the drum, essentially creating an eight-sided Gothic vault. (Scala/Art Resource, NY)

da Vinci, Mona Lisa
In 1503 Leonardo da Vinci began his most famous work— the Mona Lisa. The subject of the painting is Lisa Gherardini del Giocondo, the wife of a prominent Florentine businessman. She is posed half-length in the seated position, her posture is relaxed, and her gaze is direct. The softening of the edges of the background, effecting a fine haze called sfumato, creates a sense of intimacy and psychological drama. (Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)
Ghiberti's Gates of Paradise
Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378-1455) was given a commission to cast a pair of doors, with scenes drawn from the Old Testament, for the east side of the Baptistery of San Giovanni, Florence-thereafter known as The Gates of Paradise, so named by Michelangelo. In creating the ten 31-inch-square panels, Ghiberti’s use of perspective is one of the hallmarks of his accomplishment. (Scala/Art Resource, NY)

Michelangelo, David
The concept of genius as divine inspiration is nowhere exemplified more fully than in the life and work of Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564). And Michelangelo was a sculptor--more specifically, a carver of marble statues--to the core. His David is the earliest monumental statue of the High Renaissance, and the city fathers eventually chose to put it in front of the Palazzo Vecchio, as the civic-patriotic symbol of the Florentine republic. Michelangelo fashioned the marble in a new, more natural manner. David’s bare skin contrasts with the rough leather strap of the slingshot, and his right leg leans against a realistic tree trunk. He blends the classical model of a victorious athlete crowned with a laurel wreath with the biblical hero as a defender of the faith. David is a mature young man of consummate beauty. (Scala/Art Resource, NY)
Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel ceiling
Michelangelo Buonarroti's commission to adorn the vaults of the 130-foot-long ceiling of the Sistine Chapel was the most challenging enterprise of the Renaissance. Although Michelangelo had to adapt his monumental figures to fit the contours of the ceiling, they are highly expressive and communicate his belief that physical beauty manifests the spiritual beauty of the soul. The nine central panels portray the world described in Genesis from Creation to the Drunkenness of Noah. In the sections above the windows and in the lunettes around the windows, Michelangelo portrayed the generations of ancestors prior to Christ, and in the large corners of the chapel he depicts important scenes drawn from the Old Testament. (Vatican Museum)

van Eyck, Arnolfini Wedding
The founders of the northern school of Flemish painting were the two van Eyck brothers, Hubert and Jan (ca. 1390-1441), whose work marks a definitive break from the Middle Ages. They paid attention to minute details, and their technical artistry is particularly evident in their depiction of textures. Jan van Eyck's most famous painting, Giovanni Arnolfini and His Wife, is also filled with symbolism. The room of the bride's house in which the marriage takes place is filled with objects alluding to Netherlandish marriage customs; the little dog, symbolizing fidelity, completes the allegorical scene. Perhaps the most fascinating portion of the painting is the convex mirror—which not only reflects the bridal couple but the artist himself—and the inscription on the back-wall, which reads "Johannes de Eyck fuit hic 1434" (Jan van Eyck was here). (Reproduced by Courtesy of the Trustees, The National Gallery, London)
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FLORENCE:
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The city of Florence rose to prominence especially from the 13th century on. It had become the principal center of continental Tuscany, with a population that at this point must have been around 30,000 inhabitants, and which clearly showed signs of continued growth thanks to the arrival of immigrants from the countryside. The merchants, who had begun to organize in corporate association (the Arte dei Mercanti) in 1182 multiplied and spread well beyond the limits of their region. Around the turn of the century Florence thus became an international economic center, with its operators in the principal fairs of the West. The development of the economy went on at such a rate that in a few years the associations multiplied among the other categories of tradesmen and artisans, whose number increased considerably. The city still preserves some of the buildings which served as headquarters for the Guilds. Generally they are buildings which date back to the 14th century, such as the headquarters of the Wool Guild, built in 1308 by restructuring an extant tower.

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The surge in artistic, literary, and scientific investigation that occurred in Florence in the 14th-16th centuries was precipitated by Florentines' preoccupation with money, banking and trade and with the display of wealth and leisure.
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Portrait of Cosimo dei Medici:


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http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/m/machiavelli/niccolo/m149h/

Niccolo (di Bernardo) Machiavelli
1469-1527

Nationality: Italian
Place of Birth: Florence, Italy
Place of Death: Florence, Italy
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VENICE:

-Venice, major player in the Mediterranean economy, revival of North Italy
-Revival based on **sea power**, Genoa a major rival for Venice
-**War frequent**, strong state needed to protect the merchants
-Venetians good also in **diplomacy**, not just warfare
-**State created the institutional foundations of merchant capitalism:**
  a) Government loans
  b) Tolerant state
  c) “Democratic” system of government

POPULATION

-City of Venice in 1171: 66,000, remained one three largest cities in Europe until 16th century
-Hard to overcome population crises, Venice had an overseas empire
-Venetian expansion on Italian mainland, *terraferma*

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**Table 2-1: Population of the Venetian Empire in 1557**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City of Venice</th>
<th>1557</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March of the Lagoon</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ionia</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italya</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>2,484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,484</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Maddison 2001
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SHIPPING AND COMMERCE:

- Vital role of seapower
- Venetian organization of shipping:
  - a) state a major shipbuilder
  - b) leased galleys to private enterprise
  - c) organization, timing of convoys
- Reduced costs to private traders, protection
- Venetian Arsenal
- Major technological changes in ship construction and technology

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Modern day picture from the Arsenal

The water entrance to Arsenal, from the 18th century

View of the Arsenal from the 1750s
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SHIPPING AND COMMERCE:
- Main kinds of Venetian ships: cogs and galleys
- What were the galleys?
- Other technologies: compass, charts
- Seapower: trade routes
- Institutional basis of commerce
- Commenda
- Vera societa

FINANCE:
- Search for stable currency in Europe
- Banking
- Importance of private order institutions (see North!), legal framework conducive to merchant capitalism
- Insurance, book-keeping

http://etc.usf.edu/clipart/23500/23527/venetian_23527_lg.gif
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INDUSTRY
- Trade in various kinds of goods
- Glass industry
- Silk
- Sugar
- Book production
- Decorative arts

AGRICULTURE
- High level of development, high productive required in food production
- Imports
- Abandonment of feudalism

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THE RELATIVE DECLINE OF VENICE
- Expansion to terraferma, remained rich but surpassed by others
- Two developments: 1) Ottoman Empire restricts trade; 2) Competition from the Portuguese
- Shipbuilding technology and the Atlantic
- High productivity in the economy, nonetheless
- Thus, gradual loss of leadership in per capita income
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ECONOMIC REVIVAL:

In the thirteenth century, Europe in general was experiencing an economic boom. The trade routes of the Italian states linked with those of established Mediterranean ports and eventually the Hanseatic League of the Baltic and northern regions of Europe to create a unified European economy for the first time since the third century. The city-states of Italy expanded greatly during this period and grew in power to become de facto fully independent of the Holy Roman Empire. During this period, the modern commercial infrastructure developed, with joint stock companies, an international banking system, a systematized foreign exchange market, insurance, and government debt. Florence became the centre of this financial industry and the gold florin became the main currency of international trade.

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This produced a new mercantile governing class, who won their positions through financial skill, adapting to their purposes the feudal aristocratic model that had dominated Europe in the Middle Ages. A feature of the High Middle Ages in Northern Italy was the rise of the urban communes that had shaken off control by bishops and local counts. In much of the region the landed nobility was consistently poorer than the urban patriarchs in the High Medieval money economy, whose inflationary rise left land-holding aristocrats impoverished. The increase in trade during the early Renaissance enhanced these characteristics. The decline of feudalism and the rise of cities influenced each other; for example, the demand for luxury goods led to an increase in trade, which led to greater numbers of tradesmen becoming wealthy, who, in turn, demanded more luxury goods. This change also gave the merchants almost complete control of the governments of the Italian city-states, again enhancing trade. One of the most important effects of this political control was security. Those that grew extremely wealthy in a feudal state ran constant risk of running afoul of the monarchy and having their lands confiscated, as famously occurred to Jacques Coeur in France. The northern states also kept many medieval laws that severely hampered commerce, such as those against usury, and prohibitions on trading with non-Christians. In the city-states of Italy, these laws were repealed or rewritten.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Renaissance#European_economy
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Five questions. Getting three right = attendance. Getting five right = automatic half a point of extra credit.

1. According to Cameron and Neal, the Medieval period in Europe was characterized by: [A] the absence of trade [B] the absence of technological innovations [C] military expansion of the Roman Empire [D] the decline of the Church as an economic actor [E] none of the above


4.

5.
ANY QUESTIONS ON TODAY’S LECTURE? ANYTHING ELSE?