

ROBERT S. LOPEZ

Robert S. Lopez, Sterling Professor of History, as well as founder and chairman of the graduate program in medieval studies at Yale, was born October 8, 1910 in Genoa, Italy. Son of the Italian playwright Sabatino Lopez and of Sisa Tabet Lopez, he received a Dottore in Lettere degree from the University of Milan in 1932 and, after arriving in the United States in 1939, a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin in 1942. During the second world war, he served as a script editor at the Office of War Information for Voice of America in 1942-43 and as a foreign news editor at the Columbia Broadcasting System until 1945.

Author of 14 books and more than 100 scholarly papers, Lopez was an economic historian who focused on urbanization.

His best known books are The Birth of Europe, which was translated into seven languages from the original French, and The Commercial Revolution of Europe, which was translated into five languages. He taught economic history and literature for more than 40 years at institutions such as Yale, Harvard, Columbia, Duke, North Carolina, University of Genoa, the College de France, and the University of Tel-Aviv as well as visiting many other American and European institutions.

REFLECTIONS ON THE WORK AND CONTRIBUTIONS

OF

ROBERT SABATINO LOPEZ

Any discussion of the works of Robert Lopez must concentrate on economic history, the field in which he established himself as a world-renowned scholar. It was in economic history that he did his most imaginative, compelling, and controversial writing. Eighty per cent of his library involved economic history and related fields. The titles reflect the interests of a man conversant with at least eight languages. One of the most valuable features of the collection is the large number of volumes from his European colleagues. These volumes assisted him in keeping abreast of both European and American scholarship.

Lopez studied at the University of Milano, Italy. He began his academic career first in Sardinia, then at the University of Genoa. He spent most of his time, however, in the Archivio di Stato on Via Tommaso Reggio, near the archiepiscopal palace and the Cathedral of San Lorenzo, both of tremendous influence in medieval Genoa. At the Archivio he was introduced to the famous notarial cartularies, probably by his dear friend, Vito Vitale, at the time a prominent Genoese

scholar and a major force in the Societa Ligure di Storia Patria, then housed close to the University.

In 1933 Lopez published his first book, Genova marinara nel Duecento: Zaccaria ammiraglio e mercante (Milano, 1933). First an adventurer, the subject of this study, Benedetto, became a wealthy merchant and shipowner, later an entrepreneur in the alum mines of Phocaea in Asia Minor. In the next year Lopez offered a second study based on the notarial cartularies, "L'attivita economica di Genova nel marzo 1253 second i Cartulari Notarili" in the Atti of the Societa Ligure di Storia Patria, 64 (1934), pp. 164-270. Two books followed at two-year intervals: Studi sull' economia genovese nel medio evo (Turpin, 1936) and Storia delle colonie genovesi nel mediterraneo (Bologna, 1938).

In February, 1939, Lopez made a successful exit from Italy to England, where he spent six months, and then to the United States, specifically to the University of Wisconsin, where Professor Robert Reynolds assisted him in beginning his American career. To meet the degree requirements of an American university, he took up residence at the University of Wisconsin, served as a research assistant in the Department of History and obtained a doctorate in 1942.

From 1942 to 1944 he worked in the Italian section of the Office of War Information in New York, then taught at Brooklyn College and Columbia University. He was appointed an assistant professor of history at Yale University in 1946, eventually

becoming the Sterling Professor of Medieval History and the director of graduate studies. He remained affiliated with Yale throughout his career.

Lopez never abandoned his original interest in Genoese history. He prepared and published fifteen other studies on various aspects of Genoese commerce, diplomacy, and business, of which eleven were reprinted in Su e Giu per la Storia di Genova (Genova, 1975).

THE MEDIEVAL CITY

For Lopez the city, its life and work, was the focal point for analysis and description. His library is replete with scholarly writings on the commerce and culture of numerous cities and communities. He announced his general interest in the city (beyond Genoa) with "Mohammed and Charlemagne: A Revision" in Speculum, 18 (1943), pp. 14-38, and proceeded with "Some Tenth Century Towns" in Medievalia et Humanistica, 9 (1955), pp. 4-6, and The Tenth Century; How Dark the Dark Ages? (1959). His "La città dell' Europa post-carolingia: il commercio dell' Europa post-carolingia" in Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull' alto medioevo, II, I problemi comuni dell' Europa post-carolingia (Spoleto, 1955, pp. 547-99) has the same general theme as did La Naissance de l' Europe (Paris, 1962, and numerous translations). And one cannot forget the delightful, "The Crossroads within the Wall" in The Historian and the City (Cambridge, 1963, pp. 26-43). A

general resume of these earlier studies on the city appeared in "Of Towns and Trade" in Life and Thought in the Early Middle Ages (Minneapolis, 1967). Lopez compared the two great maritime rivals Genoa and Venice in "Venice et Genes: deux styles, une reussite" in Dioqenes (1970), pp. 39-47 (English translation), found them different but both successful, and suggested a search for the basic elements for success in "I caratteri originali della città medievale" in Concetto, storia, miti e immagini del Medio Evo (Florence, 1973), pp. 19-24. He brought many of these concepts and ideas together in "Italien: die Stadtwirtschaft, 1000-1400" in Handbuch der europaischen Sozial und Wirtschaftsgeschichte (Stuttgart, 1976).

MEDIEVAL COMMERCE

In a city such as Genoa, with the best natural harbor on the Mediterranean and little arable land for cultivation, commerce, shipping, and shipbuilding offered the most likely means of making a living. While Lopez did not concern himself to any great degree with shipping, shipbuilding, and manufacturing, he repeatedly and at length discussed commerce. His "The Trade of Medieval Europe: the South" in The Cambridge Economic History of Europe (Cambridge, 1952, pp. 257-354) is a synthesis of all scholarly writing on the subject, not matched anywhere. Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World (N.Y., 1955, 1969) by Lopez and Irving Raymond is filled with succinct, pointed analyses, together with translations, of

intricate problems in medieval commerce and shipping. It is the starting point for anyone working in the field. Similarly his The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages (1971) with Italian (1964) and French translations (1974), should be at the elbow of every worker in the field. Lopez had the ability to put scholarly analyses and controversial pronouncements into words and expositions understood by non-specialists.

In 1955 he returned to an old theme: "East and West in the Early Middle Ages: Economic Relations" in Relazioni del X Congresso Internazionale di Scienze Storiche (Roma, 1955), pp. 113-63; "The Role of Trade in the Economic Readjustment of Byzantium in the Seventh Century" in Dumbarton Oaks Papers (1959), pp. 69-85. He gave syntheses to several other aspects of the trade in "Aux origines du capitalisme genois" in Annales d'histoire economique et sociale, 9 (1937), pp. 429-54; "Italian Leadership in the Medieval Business World" in Journal of Economic History, 8 (1948), pp. 63-88; "Le Marchand Genois: un profil collectif" in Annales: economies, societes, civilisations, 8 (1958), pp. 501-15; with H.A. Miskimin and A. Udovitch, "England to Egypt, 1350-1500: Long-term Trends and Long-Distance Trade" in Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East (London - N.Y., 1970), pp. 93-128. Merely suggestive was "Le relazioni commerciali tra Genova e la Francia nel medio evo" in Cooperazione Intellettuale, 6 (1937), pp. 75-86.

In a very early study he occupied himself with the important topic of agents and procurators in "Sensali nel medio evo" in Nuova Rivista Storica, 22 (1938), pp. 108-12; more exhaustive treatments appeared in "Familiari, procuratori e dipendenti di Benedetto Zaccaria" in Miscellanea di Storia Ligure in onore di Giorgio Falco (Milan, 1962), pp. 209-49 and again in "Proxy in Medieval Trade" in Order and Innovation in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honor of Joseph R. Strayer (Princeton, 1976), pp. 187-94.

While Lopez touched upon the later Middle Ages in his earlier research, he seems to have given them greater attention in later years: "China Silk in Europe in the Yuan Period" in Journal of the American Oriental Society, 72 (1952), pp. 72-76; "Venezia e le grandi linee dell' espansione commerciale del secolo XIII" in La Civiltà Veneziana nel secolo di Marco Polo (Florence, 1955), pp. 37-82; "L'extreme frontiere du commerce del' Europe medievale" in Moyen Age, 69 (1963), pp. 479-90; "Market Expansion: the Case of Genoa" in Journal of Economic History, 24 (1964), pp. 445-64; "European Merchants in the Medieval Indies: The Evidence of Commercial Documents" in Journal of Economic History, 3 (1943), pp. 164-84; "Majorcans and Genoese on the North Sea Route in the Thirteenth Century" in Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire, 29 (1951), pp. 1163-71; "Hard Times and Investment in Culture" in Symposium on the Renaissance (N.Y., 1953), pp. 19-34; "Nuove luci sugli Italiani in Estremo Oriente prima di Colombo" in Studi

Columbiani nel V Centenario della Nascita, 3 (1952), pp. 337-98; and "Les influences Orientales et l' eveil economique de l' occident" in Journal of World History/Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale, I (1954), pp. 594-622; "The Economic Depression of the Renaissance" with H. Miskimin in The Economic History Review, 16 (1964), pp. 519-29; "Les Methodes commerciales des marchands occidentaux in Asie du XIe au XIVE siecle" in Actes du Huitieme Colloque International d'Histoire Maritime (Paris, 1970), pp. 343-48; "Medieval and Renaissance Economy and Society" in Perspectives on the European Past: Conversations with Historians (N.Y., 1971), pp. 207-27. In one brief study Lopez also concerned himself with medieval piracy: "Dieci documenti sulla guerra di Corsica," fortunately available in Su e Giu per la Storia di Genova (Genova, 1975), pp. 313-27.

COLONIES AND SETTLEMENTS

Not only was Lopez interested in the Genoese in Genoa; he also studied their settlements in the far-away colonies and throughout the commercial world. His early volume on Storia delle colonie genovesi nel mediterraneo (Bologna, 1938) was followed by several other studies. He noted especially the conflicts with the Pisans in Naples "Risse tra Pisani e Genovesi nella Napoli di Federico II" in Rassegna Storica Napoletana, 3 (1935), pp. 91-106, but there were many others, especially in Constantinople, the Kingdom of Jerusalem, Messina, and Ceuta. He followed with two similar studies in

1937: "La colonizzazione genovese nella storiografia piu recente" in Atti del Terzo Congresso di Studi Coloniali, 3 (1937), pp. 247-61, and "Stato e individuo nella storia della colonizzazione genovese" in Nuova Rivista Storica, 21 (1937), pp. 305-17. He discovered an early Genoese settlement in England in "I primi passi della colonia genovese in Inghilterra" in Bollettino Linguistico per la Storia e Cultura Regionale, 2 (1950), pp. 66-70. For his examination of the acquisition of farmlands in the interior, see his "Da mercanti a agricoltori: aspetti della colonizzazione in Corsica" in Homenaje a Jaime Vives (Barcelona, 1965), I, pp. 525-32. On a similar development, see his "Du Marche temporaire a la colonie permanente: la politique commerciale au Moyen Age" in Annales: economies, societes, civilisations, 4 (1949), pp. 389-405. He examined a different type of settlement in "Foreigners in Byzantium" in Miscellanea Charles Verlinden (Brussels-Rome, 1975), pp. 341-52.

CREDIT, BANKING, AND GOLD

Lopez' focus upon the city and overseas trade led to his research in credit, banking, and currency. As indicated below, Lopez was very much interested in the circulation and vacillations of the Byzantine bezant. On several occasions he discussed the appearance of gold and the appearance of gold coins: Il ritorno all' oro nell' occidente duecentesco (Naples, 1955); "Back to Gold" in Economic History Review, 9 (1956), pp.

219-40, but he also gave attention to silver and silver coins: "Contributo alla storia delle miniere argentifere di Sardegna" in Studi economico-giuridici della R. Università di Cagliari, 24 (1936), pp. 3-18; "Prima del ritorno all' oro nell'occidente duecentesco: i primi denari grossi d'argento" in Rivista Storica Italiana, 79 (1967), pp. 174-81. In an extraordinary article, he discussed those to whom the task of coining the money was entrusted as well: "An Aristocracy of Money in the Early Middle Ages" in Speculum, 28 (1953), pp. 1-43; "Continuita e adattamento nel Medio Evo: un millennio di storia delle associazioni di monetieri" in Studi in Onore di Gino Luzzatto (Milano, 1949), pp. 74-117; "Moneta e monetieri nell' Italia barbarica" in Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull' alto medioevo (Spoleto, 1959), pp. 731-48; and "Une Histoire a trois niveaux: la circulation monetaire" in Melanges en l'honneur de Fernand Braudel, II (Paris, 1973), pp. 335-41; "Un Chapiteau des monnayeurs a Notre-Dame de Saintes" in Melanges E.R. Labande (Poitiers, 1974), pp. 501-03. His La prima crisi della banca in Genova, secolo XIII appeared in 1959. On credit in commerce he offered "Il problema della bilancia dei pagamenti nel commercio di Levante" in Venezia e il Levante fino al secolo XV (Florence, 1973), pp. 431-52.

BYZANTIUM

Lopez had an abiding interest in Byzantium and its relations with the West, especially in the early Middle Ages.

That interest first appeared in "Byzantine Law in the Seventh Century and its Reception by the Germans and Arabs" in Byzantion, 16 (1942-43), pp. 445-61 and "Le probleme des relations Anglo-Byzantines du septieme au dixieme siecle" in Byzantion, 18 (1946), pp. 139-62; the highly significant "Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire" in Speculum, 20 (1945), pp. 1-42; and "The Byzantine Economy in the Early Middle Ages" in Gieysztor Festschrift, (Warsaw, 1976). However, his real interest was in the Byzantine bezant: "La Crise du Besant au dixieme siecle et la date du livre du prefet" in Melanges Henri Gregoire, 2 (1950), pp. 403-18; "Harmenopoulos and the Downfall of the Bezant" in Tomos Konstantinou Armenopoulou (Salonike, 1951), pp. 111-25; "Un Borgne au Royaume des Aveugles: La position de Byzance dans l'economie Europeenne de Haut Moyen Age" in Bulletin de l'Association Marc Bloch de Toulouse, 5-6 (1953-55), pp. 25-30; and the very compelling "The Dollar of the Middle Ages" in Journal of Economic History, 11 (1951), pp. 209-34. At least twelve of his studies dealt directly with Byzantium.

SPAIN

It does not appear that Spain, in spite of the family's distant origins, had much appeal for Lopez professionally. Very early he wrote on the "Il predominio economico dei genovesi nella monarchia spagnola" in Giornale Storico e Letterario della Liguria, 12 (1936), pp. 65-74, many years

later "Alfonso el Sabio y el primer Almirante de Castilla Genoves" in Cuadernos de Historia de España, 14 (1950), pp. 5-16; similarly "Ugo Vento primo ammiraglio genovese di Castiglia" in Bollettino Linguistico per la Storia e la Cultura Regionale, 3 (1951), pp. 65-71. On another subject he reversed the order with "The Origin of the Merino Sheep" in The Joshua Starr Memorial Volume (N.Y., 1953), pp. 161-68, and "El origen de la Oveja Merina" in Estudios de Historica Moderna, 4 (1954), 3-11. Lopez never really concerned himself with Spanish affairs, even with Columbus, possibly because another Genoese scholar, Carlo Bornate, was working on him.

MISCELLANEOUS STUDIES

Lopez largely left the crusaders and crusader states to his colleagues, except for the introductory chapter "Fulfillment and Diversion in the Eight Crusades" in Outremer: Studies in the History of the Crusading Kingdom of Jerusalem (Jerusalem, 1982), pp. 15-26. He wrote only one article on urban industry and that for a special purpose: "L' Artisanat et la vie en Pologne médiévale: discussion générale" in Ergon, 3 (1962), pp. 524-27. To the Arabs and Islam he dedicated three specific studies, but he was concerned with them generally in many other studies: "L' Importanza del mondo islamico nella vita economica europea" in Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di studi sull' alto medioevo, XII: L'Occidente e l' Islam nell' alto medioevo (Spoleto, 1963), pp. 433-60. He

referred to merchant manuals repeatedly, but wrote about them on only two occasions: "'Stars and Spices': The Earliest Italian Manual of Commercial Practice" in Economy, Society, and Government in Medieval Italy in Honor of Robert L. Reynolds (Kent, Ohio, 1969), pp. 35-42; "Un texte inédit: Le plus ancien manuel italien de technique commerciale" in Revue Historique, 493 (1970), pp. 67-76. He expressed deep doubts about the early trips to Vinland with "The Case is not Settled" in Proceedings of the Vinland Map Conference (Chicago, 1971), pp. 31-34.

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The Lopez Collection at Arizona State University is an excellent place from which to start any serious study of the economic history of the Middle Ages, especially of the cities and their commerce. Because of the European background of Lopez, his personal love of books, his numerous European friends and colleagues, the collection provides many titles not readily available in many University Libraries. Arizona State University was able to acquire this collection through the foresight and generosity of Claude-Anne Kirschen Lopez who wanted the library of Robert to enrich the collection of a developing program in Medieval and Renaissance studies. "Go West, good books."

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