

6. The European Age of Discovery in the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries was possible because of what important elements. Discuss.

Considering the fact that there was socio-political peace in Spain and Portugal, economic stability, and new technology available, the European Age of Discovery in the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries was feasible. Although, religious rivalry in Europe should also be considered.

Spain and Portugal were experiencing a time of socio-political peace during the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, therefore, this led them to many other exciting opportunities such as exploration of the New World. In both of these countries at this time, there were no wars occurring. There may not have been any wars at the time, but there was still an established military waiting to be deployed. These soldiers in the military didn't have any specific tasks to complete at the time, so the extra soldiers became explorers for Spain and Portugal. In Spain during this time, they were purging the entire country of its minorities. Spain was predominantly Roman Catholic so the minorities were peoples such as the Jews, Blacks, and the Moors. Once Spain stopped giving rights, such as owning land, to the minorities they started becoming successful on their own. The Christians became more and more hostile toward the Jews as they started to become more successful and prosperous. This angered the Christians of Spain so much, that they drove them out all together in 1492. With all the minorities gone from Spain and Portugal, they had peace within their own countries, therefore they had the time, and the mind set to explore the world.

In Europe during the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, it was also a time of economic stability. The socio-political peace also attributed to this because of the fact that there was peace and the military wasn't needed, therefore, there were no war debts. With no wars or a need for supplying a military, there was money available for other things, especially exploration. In Europe during this time period, it was also a time of agricultural prosperity. The European system of Feudalism was also very successful during this time. Agricultural success led to an increase in commerce and trade. With the agricultural prosperity came more revenue for local towns, which led to more revenues to the King. When Kings had extra time and money, he was willing to spend it on exploration to discover and claim foreign places to get ahead of other countries in the region. A great example of this would be the expeditions of Christopher Columbus. Christopher Columbus had proposed his ideas of reaching the East by sailing west to many European countries, but no one accepted his great ideas until he came upon Isabella and Ferdinand of Spain. Spain had all the characteristics of a country that was willing to spend its time and money on exploration.

Another factor that attributed to making the European Age of Discovery feasible was the new technology available. One man that helped the development of this technology was Prince Henry the Navigator of Portugal. He developed the first navigational study. Prince Henry the navigator also created an institute of mapmakers, shipbuilders, geographers, and some of the men of Sagres. The men of Sagres helped develop a new and more successful ship called a caravel which stored much more than previous ships built in Europe. Some of the new technology helped benefit the sailing industry. Examples of this would include the lateen sails, new rudders, and better compasses. Without these new developments in Europe, the European Age of Discovery would not have existed. More information was also being processed in Europe during the late Middle Ages because information withheld in Muslim

libraries was being released. Knowledge of the prevailing winds was also an extremely important factor in exploration during these times, because without it, Christopher Columbus wouldn't have been able to complete his expedition to America.

Considering the fact that there was socio-political peace in Spain and Portugal, economic stability, and new technology available, the European Age of Discovery in the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries was feasible. Although, religious rivalry in Europe should also be considered.