

## DIRECTIONS OF TRADE

## LOCAL AND INTER-REGIONAL TRADE

The difficulty of differentiating between purely commercial goods and goods to be sold or bought for own consumption was apparently not so great nor so frequent in the transports to local markets, which were representative of local or home trades. These local markets, generally situated in the countryside, were mostly visited by ordinary people who were free of taxes for victuals and utensils bought or sold in small quantities (*per denegatas*). The transport services of abbeys and churches, also greater in volume, were generally directed to more important markets, situated in urban centres. Except for a fortuitous anecdote in a saint's life, sources are normally silent about what happened in these small markets. Only occasionally are we thus informed of the commodities exchanged. These were wool, flax, finished textiles, iron objects, ploughshares and other agricultural instruments such as metallic sickles, or surpluses from the peasants' own production, mainly grain or seeds, horses and cattle. Normally these markets were held weekly but some grew in importance and developed into an annual fair. This was the case at St Hubert and Bastogne in the Ardennes.<sup>1</sup>

Inter-regional trade, between regions sometimes more than hundreds of kilometres distant from each other, had its stations, annual fairs excepted, in urban centres of different origin, size and

<sup>1</sup> Georges Despy, 'Villes et campagnes aux ix<sup>e</sup> et x<sup>e</sup> siècles: l'exemple du pays mosan', *Revue de Nord*, 50 (1968), pp. 162-5.

importance. Some of them were old Roman *civitates*, like most Italian cities and many in southern Gaul (Marseilles, Arles, Narbonne, Lyon) and like Rouen, Paris, Amiens, Tournai, Cambrai, Maastricht, Mainz, respectively situated on the Seine, the Somme, the Maas and the Rhine. Others were smaller *castella* of Roman origin, like Huy and Dinant on the Meuse and many smaller towns on the Rhine and the Danube. That most of them were situated on waterways or along or near the coast is easily explained by the fact that their main merchandise was bulk commodities, mostly transported by ship.

Salt was certainly the most transported merchandise over large distances, partly because it was the main preserving product in those as in later ages and also because it was only found, exploited and produced in a few places. One of these places was in the salt pans around the mouth of the Loire and especially the Baie de Bourgneuf. They were exploited by private entrepreneurs, partially on account of the king.<sup>2</sup> From Nantes the salt was transported by ship along the Loire and its tributaries, past Angers, Tours, Orléans and Nevers. Salt is mentioned as an important element of the cargo of their ships in several charters of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious for abbeys situated on or near the Loire. Another element may have been grain. It seems doubtful that the totality of the transported salt was brought to the abbey and not sold partially en route. Sometimes, perhaps because of special climatic circumstances that affected the Loire river as well as some salt-producing places in north-eastern France, salt was brought there over land from the Atlantic coast.

Another salt-producing region, the exploitation of which was described in Chapter 5, was around Metz in north-eastern France. Several abbeys (Prüm, Aniane, Corvey, St Denis) possessed salt pans at Marsal and Vic-sur-Seille, the production of which was transported downstream on the river Moselle. The abbey of Prüm was the most involved in this production and transport. Obligatory transport services for this abbey brought not only salt, but also especially wine and grain, on rafts down the Moselle.

The best documented salt trade of the Carolingian period was that carried on by Bavarians on the river Danube between Passau and the eastern borders of the empire during the last quarter of the ninth century. An inquiry from 903–5, known as *Inquisitio Raffelstettensis* was made into the situation and tariffs at different toll stations in

<sup>2</sup> Ganshof, 'Tonlieu', p. 488, and above Chapter 5.

that area.<sup>3</sup> It reveals that inhabitants of Bavaria, who were not all professional merchants, were favoured against professional merchants from elsewhere (Jews and others) when they had to pay taxes when selling salt on public markets, especially at Linz. The salt was brought from the mines at Reichenhall by ship on the river Inn to Passau and from there downstream eastwards, beyond Linz, to legitimate markets (*mercatum constitutum*) in the Ostmark. There they could, after having paid the many transport tolls, carry on their trade without paying a market toll. Salt was also brought to the Ostmark on carts, over the *strata legitima*, where there was protection. Compensation for the many tolls between Passau and the eastern frontier of the empire was the freedom from tax for the Bavarians when they entered the empire again and sailed upstream. At this point their commerce was no longer intra- or inter-regional, but became international, with other commodities than just salt being exported and imported.

Places at the estuary of the river Po, such as Comacchio or to the north of it Venice, produced little more than salt. Initially, because a charter on that matter had been granted by the Lombard King Liutprand in 715, this salt was transported upstream along the Po to its confluence with the Oglio between Cremona and Mantua by agents of Comacchio privileged as *milites*. Soon though, in the second half of the ninth century, the Comacchesi were elbowed out of this traffic by traders from Cremona (852) and by Venetians who, in 862, owed payments to the office of the abbey of Bobbio in Mantua.<sup>4</sup>

Next to salt, grain was certainly the second bulk commodity most traded in inter-regional commerce. The most intriguing question about this trade is which regions, when not afflicted by famine, needed grain imports for their normal subsistence. The just-quoted salt-producing region around the Po estuary, gives a very appropriate answer. It produced little more than salt and had a great need for agrarian products. These were brought down the Po from the markets in Pavia, Piacenza, Cremona, Parma and Mantua, where big abbeys such as Bobbio, Sta Giulia di Brescia, Novalesa and others possessed subsidiaries to which they brought surpluses from their estates, especially corn and oil. These towns themselves were more populated than most towns in the more northern parts of the Carolingian empire

<sup>3</sup> François-L. Ganshof, 'Note sur l' "Inquisitio de theloneis Raffelstettensis"', *Le Moyen Âge* 72 (1966), pp. 197–224; Adam, *Zollwesen*, pp. 124–7.

<sup>4</sup> Cinzio Violante, *La società milanese nell'età precomunale*, new edition (Rome, Bari,

and hence were grain consuming. Situated in the fertile valleys of the Po and its tributaries they did not, however, feed a grain trade over long distances and of inter-regional character.

The same cannot probably be said of the grain trade on the river Main upstream of its confluence with the Rhine at Mainz. It looks as if it was indeed fed by the city of Mainz and its supraregional importance. Merchants from Mainz, Einhard tells us, used to bring grain (*frumentum*) from the 'upper parts' of Germany, probably Upper Franconia and especially the region around Würzburg, by ship to Mainz.<sup>5</sup> This important city not only needed this supply from a region more than a hundred kilometres away because of the number of its inhabitants, but also because it was a grain market the reputation of which transcended just the Mainz region. In 850 the author of the *Annals of Fulda* was informed about the grain price on the market of Mainz, which was fairly high at that moment because of a famine in the Rhine region. These merchants however, also brought wine down the river Main. The question then arises whether part of this grain and wine was transported from Mainz further northward down the Rhine, especially when the presence in Mainz of a colony of Frisian merchants in the second half of the ninth century is taken into account. As Frisian merchants brought wine and grain from Alsace down the upper Rhine, and wine from the Worms region, it seems not impossible that on their way northward, passing by Mainz, they used its port for storage and loaded grain and wine coming to Mainz from Upper Franconia. Sailing further down the Rhine their final destination probably was Dorestad.<sup>6</sup> Excavations here brought to light oakwood identified as coming from Rheinhessen and white pinewood from Alsace, both from casks in which wine had been transported. Both for grain and wine Dorestad was the end of an inter-regional trade route, but at the same time the starting point for international export trade of grain and wine to northern Europe.<sup>7</sup> There is a discussion about whether the countryside around Dorestad had an agricultural production sufficient for a population that has been estimated not to be much higher than 1,500. While the supply of cattle seems to have been no problem, I doubt that Frisia, being a densely populated region with a very limited capacity for arable farming because of its

<sup>5</sup> Georg Waitz (ed.), *Translatio et Miracula SS. Marcellini et Petri*, MGH, SS.xv-1, p. 250, c. 6: 'mercatores quidam de civitate Mogontiaci, qui frumentum in superioribus Germaniae partibus emere ac per fluvium Moinum ad urbem devehere solebant.'

<sup>6</sup> Lebecqz, *Marchands frison*, pp. 28, 236-7.

<sup>7</sup> Van Duyn, *China and the Carolingians*, pp. 163-72.

geographical condition, produced enough grain for a population that has been estimated at 30,000.<sup>8</sup> I therefore think that the inter-regional grain trade from the upper and middle Rhine region to Dorestad was not only for export overseas, but also for consumption in the region itself.

There were of course other regions where the same situation existed as in Frisia.<sup>9</sup> The north of medieval Flanders was in the ninth and still in the tenth and eleventh centuries a wooded area with large moorlands in between. Arable farming was not yet very developed and produced more oats than spelt, wheat or rye. The same was true of the Belgian Ardennes where, after the first clearances in the ninth century, oats were the principal produce. Nevertheless, towns like Ghent and Bruges, Maastricht and Huy, however small some of them were at their start in the ninth century, had to be supplied with grain from more fertile regions in southern Flanders or southern Brabant. The rich abbey of St Bavo's at Ghent can rightly be supposed to have brought grain from its estates in southern Flanders and northern France, along the rivers Leie and Scheldt to Ghent, not only for the abbey's consumption, but probably also to be sold to the urban population.

Abbot Adalhard of Corbie in his famous *Statutes* of 822 making sound calculations of the grain supply needed from the abbey's estates for the monastery's huge population, still ordered that grain from estates farther than 30 km away, should not be brought to the abbey, but sold on the spot. This may also have fed an inter-regional grain trade to the neighbouring towns of Amiens, Cambrai and Arras. To differentiate it from local trade is rather difficult in these cases.

Differentiation between inter-regional trade and international commerce is also particularly difficult for that other bulk commodity, wine. What has been said about the grain trade from Alsace and the middle Rhine region to Dorestad, is true for wine from those regions, which was often associated with it, as shown above. The same association occurred in the transport of (mainly) wine and also grain by ship and rafts on the Moselle downstream of Trier on behalf of the abbey of Prüm at the end of the ninth century. Another very important wine-producing region where inter-regional trade fed international commerce, was along the upper and middle Seine. The abbey of St Germain-des-Prés possessed so many vineyards

here that its production, estimated at 15,000 mud, greatly exceeded the needs of its own consumption, which were estimated at 2,000 mud.<sup>10</sup> This enormous surplus was brought into commerce and for a large part transported along the Seine to Paris by means of transport services for the abbey. The latter may have sold it on the fair of St Denis, in October after the vintage, which was the greatest wine market of western Europe. Since the middle of the eighth century Frisians and (Anglo-) Saxons visited it to buy and export wine. The fair of St Denis, where also wine from the abbey of St Denis itself must have been sold, thus had somewhat the same role as Dorestad: the end of an inter-regional trade route and the starting point of international commerce.<sup>11</sup>

The possession of vineyards in wine-producing regions by abbeys not themselves situated in such regions and at great distances from the seat of the abbey has been used by the late professor Hans Van Werveke, one of Pirenne's students and his successor at Ghent university, as a decisive proof of the absence of commerce in Carolingian times.<sup>12</sup> It is impossible here to refute his whole argument, but some points in it must be criticised in the context of our exposition. Van Werveke cannot of course deny the wine trade of the Frisians, but he limits its effects to Holland, arguing that Dutch abbeys had no distant vineyards because, thanks to the Frisian wine trade, they did not need them. The abbeys in present-day Belgium to which he limits his article, on the contrary, would not have been touched by this Frisian trade! Considering the list of geographically distant vineyards of 'Belgian' abbeys in the Carolingian period, one gets the impression that they were not very important, even if exceptionally situated in the well-known wine-producing regions along the Rhine and the Seine. Most were situated around Laon and Soissons, north of Paris.

The export of quern-stones from the volcanic basalt quarries of Niedermendig near Mayen and shipped from nearby Andernach to Dorestad was an inter-regional transport of bulk that debouched into

<sup>10</sup> Elmshäuser and Hedwig, *Studien zum Polyptychon von Saint-Germain-des-Prés*, pp. 365–99.

<sup>11</sup> Lebecq, *Marchands frisons*, pp. 25–6.

<sup>12</sup> Hans Van Werveke, 'Comment les établissements religieux belges se procuraient-ils du vin au haut moyen âge?', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 2 (1923), pp. 643–62, reprinted in Van Werveke, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia*, pp. 12–29.

an international trade.<sup>13</sup> Many hundreds of fragments have been excavated at Dorestad, where these stones were of course not all used, but finished off to be exported on a large scale to England and northern Europe. They have been excavated in great numbers at Hamwic, London, York, Ribe and Hedeby, and can be identified with the 'black stones' (*petrae nigrae*) Charlemagne wrote about in his famous letter of 796 to King Offa of Mercia, to ask what size he wanted.<sup>14</sup>

Ceramics mainly originated from the middle Rhine south of Cologne, near Brühl, particularly the famous Badorf ware from c. 725 onwards to the end of the ninth century. During a shorter period (c. 775–c. 825), the so-called Tating jars spread over a large part of south and south-east England, especially at Hamwic, and in northern Europe, especially at Hedeby and Birka. Their production, clearly orientated to export, was also providing a bulk commodity in inter-regional trade.<sup>15</sup> The well-known *Miracles of St Goar* by Wandelbert, c. 839,<sup>16</sup> tells the adventure of a group of potters, transporting pots on the Rhine, with the intention of selling them in retail trade. It is likely that they sailed upstream near St Goar, probably coming from Brühl or Andernach. The pots were empty; being transported by potters, it is unlikely that they would have contained wine. These circumstances clearly point at a regional trade in ceramics.

#### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Several examples of inter-regional trade quoted above have shown a link to international trade, some to the extent that in fact they may be considered as part of an international current. This was particularly the case on the Rhine route, which was the most important connection between north and south Europe in Carolingian times. In this respect it was the successor of the Rhône valley in the Merovingian period. The main cause for this shift is the decline of the ports of Provence in their role of intermediary for the trade between Italy and northern Europe.

This decline cannot be explained in the first place by the Arab conquest of the western Mediterranean, as Pirenne thought. We now

<sup>13</sup> Steuer, 'Handel aufgrund archäologischer Zeugnisse', pp. 142–6.

<sup>14</sup> This traditional interpretation has recently been challenged: Hodges, *Towns and Trade*, pp. 64–6.

<sup>15</sup> Steuer, 'Handel aufgrund archäologischer Zeugnisse', pp. 134–42.

<sup>16</sup> Lebecq, *Marchands frisons*, II, pp. 150–1.

know, through the research of D. Claude on commerce in the western Mediterranean since late Antiquity<sup>17</sup> and by the work of Simon Loseby on Marseilles,<sup>18</sup> that the decline of the Provençal ports started much earlier and had already reached a very low point in the seventh century. But the decline was not uniform.<sup>19</sup> Some of Marseilles' connections in the Mediterranean persisted beyond the Arab conquest, well into the eighth century. Several diplomatic missions from Rome came by sea to Marseilles, especially during the years of tension between the Carolingians and the king of the Lombards in the third quarter of the eighth century, when the latter had closed the passes over the Alps. Economically, however, this did not mean much, not even the presence of an Anglo-Saxon merchant named Botto in Marseilles around 750. In the second quarter and the middle of the ninth century Arab raids seriously endangered overseas traffic to the Provençal ports, especially to Marseilles and Arles and around the isles of Corsica, Sardinia and Majorca. A dramatic illustration of this situation was the sinking by the Arabs in 820, reported by the royal Frankish annals, of eight merchant ships on their way from Sardinia to Italy. This incident is characteristic of the contradictory situation in the western Mediterranean at that time: although the danger was great, commerce went on, albeit on a reduced scale. It helps perhaps to understand the contradictions between the archaeological gap in the habitat of Marseilles, and in its minting during the eighth and ninth centuries on the one hand, and some written evidence on the other, pointing to some economic activity. This documentary evidence partly comes from the important abbey of St Victor at Marseilles. Not only is there the famous polyptych of St Victor, from the beginning of the ninth century, revealing the dynamic demographical situation of a young population but also some toll privileges. If the gift of the toll of Lion on the étang de Berre to the abbey of St Victor in 822 may still be interpreted as the sign of the growing importance of a smaller local port and market as a competitor to the neighbouring port of Marseilles, the gift to St Victor in 841 of

<sup>17</sup> Dietrich Claude, *Der Handel im westlichen Mittelmeer während des Frühmittelalters* (Göttingen, 1985) (*Untersuchungen zu Handel und Verkehr der vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Zeit in Mittel- und Nordeuropa*, vol. 2, Abhandlungen Akademie Göttingen, Phil.-Hist. Klasse, 3rd series, no. 144).

<sup>18</sup> Simon T. Loseby, 'Marseille and the Pirenne Thesis II: "Ville Morte"', in Hansen and Wickham (eds.), *The Long Eighth Century*, pp. 167–93.

<sup>19</sup> Francois-L. Ganshof, 'Note sur les ports de Provence', *Revue Historique* 183 (1938), pp. 183–207.



the toll on ships from Italy, mooring at the Vieux-port of Marseilles at the foot of St Victor's abbey and the freedom of toll given to the abbey of St Denis by Charles the Bald in 845 for goods bought or sold at Marseilles, indicate that the city had not totally lost its function in international commerce. Its function as a central place, however, especially in the ecclesiastical sphere, shifted into the interior, away from the sea, to the more inland situated port of Arles in the second half of the ninth century. In 878 Pope John VIII, with three ships from Naples and after an intermediate stop at Genoa, called at the port of Arles.<sup>20</sup>

The end of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth century marked for nearly a century, with the Arab conquest of Sicily, the Arab domination of the western Mediterranean. This did not exclude traffic and commerce over land, particularly with Spain and even with the Arabs themselves. Arles had an important role in it as intermediary as early as the beginning of the ninth century. The poet Theodulf, himself of Spanish origin, saw at Arles in 812 luxury goods, like leather from Cordoba, silk, jewels and also Arab coins, brought to that place by Arab merchants.<sup>21</sup> Quicksilver, used for jewellery making in western Europe, must also have been imported from Spanish mines. Slaves, captured from central and eastern Europe by Charlemagne's campaigns against the Saxons, Danes, Slavonic tribes and Avars, and brought via Verdun, Lyon and Narbonne, to Arles, were exported, mainly by Jews, some of Spanish origin, to Saragossa and Cordoba, via Ampurias and Gerona and the Pyrenees pass of Le Perthus.<sup>22</sup>

The shift from the sea route between Italy and the Provençal ports to the Alpine passes was accelerated by the Frankish conquest in 774 of the Lombard kingdom in Italy. In the following year the abbey of St Denis was privileged with freedom from the toll levied under the name *exclusaticum* at the Alpine passes most used by the abbey, probably the Mont Cenis or the Great St Bernard pass. These were the passes for the traffic from northern France and the Rhineland into Italy.<sup>23</sup> From Bavaria and the most eastern provinces of the Frankish

<sup>20</sup> Ganshof, 'Ports de Provence', pp. 32–3.

<sup>21</sup> R. Doehaerd, *Le Haut Moyen Âge Occidental. Economie et sociétés* (Paris, 1971), p. 278. Transl.: *Early Middle Ages in the West. Economy and Society* (New York 1978).

<sup>22</sup> Charles Verlinden, *L'esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale*, 1, *Peninsule ibérique-France* (Bruges, 1955; Rijksuniversiteit Gent. Werken Fac. Letteren en Wijsbegeerte 119), pp. 709–17.

<sup>23</sup> Garbino, 'Tollshutten', pp. 492–3 and note 16.

empire into Italy several more eastward passes, known as the 'Bündner passes', in the modern Swiss canton of Graubünden (among them the Septimer and the Julier), were used. The tolls levied at these passes (*ad clusas*), probably since late Antiquity and maintained by the Lombard king, were considered frontier tolls, even after the incorporation of the Lombard kingdom in the Frankish empire.<sup>24</sup> Like those at Quentovic and Dorestad and probably also at the Perthuis pass to Spain, they amounted to the considerable tax of 10 per cent *ad valorem* and were the most important of the empire. We know more however about the crossing of the Alps by Charlemagne himself, the pope and their envoys, than about commercial traffic on these routes. It may be considered for the larger part as international, although the Lombard kingdom was since 774 part of the Frankish empire. The internal economy of the Lombard kingdom was like that of Provence in the eighth and ninth centuries, not very dynamic, notwithstanding the continuity of urban life in the cities of northern Italy. The incentives for international commercial traffic from Italy northward over the Alps and vice versa came from the theoretically Byzantine, but practically independent territories and cities: chiefly Venice, but also Naples, Amalfi, Otranto and, in another context, Rome, which with its 25,000 inhabitants was still the largest city of Italy.<sup>25</sup> By the end of the eighth century the depressing effects of Byzantine control over the central Mediterranean had ceased and commercial relations with the eastern Mediterranean intensified. The treaty of 812 between Charlemagne and the Emperor Michael of Byzantium gave Venice great possibilities in the eastern basin of the Mediterranean.<sup>26</sup> At the beginning of the ninth century the city emerged as the successor of Marseilles as port of trade for east-Mediterranean goods. It now enjoyed protection from the Carolingian kings of Italy, as it had from their Lombard predecessors, and in 840 from the emperor Lotharius. The *pactum Lotharii* exempted Venice from toll and berthing taxes (*ripaticum*) and made it possible for its merchants to expand to the central and northern parts of the Frankish empire, while traders from the latter were given concessions in the shipping trade

<sup>24</sup> P. Duparc, 'Les cluses et la frontière des Alpes', *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 109 (1951), pp. 5–31; Gaston G. Dept, 'Le mot 'clusas' dans les diplômes carolingiens', in *Mélanges d'histoire offerts à Henri Pirenne*, 1 (Brussels, 1926), pp. 89–98; Johaneck, 'Fränkische Handel', p. 16 and note 39.

<sup>25</sup> Wickham, *Land and Power*, pp. 108–16.

<sup>26</sup> *Venedice, Basilio, Milano, Scipione* (1850) - printed on 3/14/2012 5:37 AM via

by the Venetians and even participated in the Venetian commercial enterprises with money. Venetian merchants around 780 brought to Pavia, the king's capital in Italy, silk and Byzantine textiles (*pallia*). A century later, Notker Balbulus, the famous monk and story-teller from St Gall, mentions as imports from the Near East in Pavia silk, purpur from Tyrus, ermine and from Persia balm, unguent, perfumes, medicine and pigment. As early as 750, according to the *Liber Pontificalis*, Venetians travelled to Rome in order to buy slaves for export, probably to North Africa. From Alexandria Venetian merchants in 827 brought the relics of St Marc to their city. It seems likely that goods from eastern Europe, imported through Bohemia and the Avar territory into the Ostmark (actual Austria) and Bavaria over the Danube, reached Venice over the Bündner passes and were exported to the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>27</sup> From a polyptych describing royal estates around 842–3 in the region of Chur (actual north-east Switzerland), we know that a toll at Walenstadt, on the Walensee, was levied on slaves and horses, probably imported from eastern Europe through Bavaria, which were brought over the Alpine passes into Italy and most likely, because of the geographic orientation, to Venice. A confirmation of the position of Walenstadt on the route to Italy can be found in a letter by Alcuin from 791–6 to the bishop of Chur, asking for his intervention against the receivers of the toll in favour of his personal merchant (*negotiator*) bringing home goods from Italy (*Italiae mercimonia*).<sup>28</sup>

The international character of the commerce of the Byzantine cities in southern Italy was perhaps geographically less extensive than that of Venice, although the slaves raided in 836 in the Beneventan territory by merchants from Naples were to be exported to Egypt. Our information on goods imported through Venice or other Italian ports from the eastern Mediterranean into western Europe in the Carolingian period is nearly non-existent. Apart from one mention of a transport of olive oil on the Rhine, there is one controversial text concerning the presence at the market of Cambrai of spices and other special oriental wares, which the person for whom the text was written had to buy 'if there was money enough'. Although preserved in a manuscript dated between 822 (because the text is preceded by the famous *Statutes* of abbot Adalhard of Corbie of that year) and

<sup>27</sup> Dopsch, *Wirtschaftsentwicklung*, II, pp. 202–10; Doehaerd, *Haut Moyen Âge*, pp. 277–81.

<sup>28</sup> Dopsch, *Die Wirtschaftsentwicklung*, I, pp. 111–20.

986, Pirenne and several authors after him considered the text as typical Merovingian and used it for contrasting that period to the Carolingian period, when according to them such a text had been impossible. I am not convinced by such a circular argument and, without having a definite opinion for the moment, I do not think it impossible that the text may be of the date of the manuscript and related, in one way or another, to the *Statutes* of Adalhard of Corbie.<sup>29</sup>

The unstable political and military situation in and around the Mediterranean during the eighth and ninth centuries, the lack of internal dynamics of the Lombard part of Italy (notwithstanding the rise of Venice and its relations and those of other Byzantine cities in Italy with the eastern Mediterranean), the decline around the Mediterranean of the production of fine ceramics suitable for export to western Europe and thus for archaeological investigation there – these are all factors that can explain the scarcity of evidence for the import of Mediterranean products into western Europe under the Carolingians. The cause is not a single one like the Arab invasions and raids invoked by Pirenne, but a complex of factors, among which the Arabs are one, the effect of which was to shift the centre of gravity to north-west and northern Europe, as Pirenne had rightly seen. However, the dynamic economy of these northern regions produced archaeological evidence which Pirenne could not have known and to which we will turn now.

Our knowledge of trade relations between the Frankish empire and northern Europe, mainly with England and Scandinavia, is for the larger part based on archaeological evidence, confirmed from time to time by written texts.<sup>30</sup> The products exported from the Carolingian empire to the north – ceramics, glass, quern-stones, metallic objects – are mainly archaeological whereas those imported from the north – furs, hides and fells, wax and amber, even slaves – have never or seldom left material traces. From this one gets the impression that there was more imported into England and Scandinavia than exported from these countries to the Carolingian empire, an impression that might be correct. The numerous Carolingian coins found in the north may well be related to tributes paid to the Vikings and do not necessarily reflect an unequal balance of payments.

<sup>29</sup> Verhulst, *Rise of Cities*, p. 58.

<sup>30</sup> Steiner, 'Handel, aufferund archäologischer Zeugnisse';

Since the middle of the eighth century most merchants operating on the North Sea were Frisians and the history of commerce on and around the North Sea is mainly theirs.<sup>31</sup> They were also operating along the Rhine between Dorestad and the Alps. In different cities along that river, in Worms, Mainz, Duisburg and Birten near Xanten, they had established colonies during the second half of the ninth century. Apart from the isolated presence of a Frisian merchant in London before the end of the seventh century, their collective and regular appearance at the fair of St Denis since at least 753, in the track of English merchants, marks the beginning of their domination of northern commerce. They came there to buy wine from the Seine region and it is probable that, as well as transporting it to their Frisian homeland, they exported it outside Carolingian borders as they did wine from Alsace, the remains of the wooden casks of which were excavated at Hedeby. We do not know, however, if the wine from the Paris region was transported in wooden casks or in jars and amphores of the Badorf type, the oldest sherds of which in England were found in London and date from *c.* 775. The Badorf ceramics were produced near Brühl, south of Cologne, and their use at the St Denis fair is not certain at all. It is archaeologically impossible to determine if the jars and amphores of the Badorf type were exported for themselves as luxury goods or were filled with wine. However, their shards were found in great numbers at the *emporium* of Hamwic on the English Channel coast near Southampton, just opposite the mouth of the Seine downstream of Rouen. The same is true, but for a shorter period ending around 825, for the famous jars of so-called Tating ware, which were produced in the region of Niedermendig, between the Rhine and the Moselle not far from Koblenz and Andernach. Both types of ceramic were also exported to Scandinavia, where at both Ribe and Hedeby they represent 5 to 7 per cent of the ceramic finds.<sup>32</sup> Further north, they have also been found at Kaupang, near Oslo, and particularly at Birka, the important port of trade on the isle of Björkö in lake Mälär in central Sweden. To this place, however distant, they were brought no doubt by Frisian merchants, because the relations between Birka and Dorestad were particularly intense at the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century. The main written source for this assertion is the *Vita Anskarii* from 865–76, the

<sup>31</sup> Lebecq, *Marchands frisons*.

<sup>32</sup> Ulf Näsman, 'Exchange and Politics: the Eighth–Early Ninth Century in Denmark, the Hansa and Wick (Sweden)', in *Longueuil, 1007–1157, Appendix 4*–7.

Life of Anshar, archbishop of Bremen–Hamburg, who evangelised the Birka region. It tells the story of a rich lady with the Frisian name Frideburg, living at Birka, who, in around 845–50, asked her daughter Catla in her will to give away her fortune to the (allegedly) many churches of Dorestad and to the poor there.<sup>33</sup> At Hedeby too, according to the same source, there were many Christians baptised in Dorestad or Hamburg and who belonged to the upper class of the place. In England, mostly in London and Hamwic, and in Ribe, Hedeby, Kaupang and Uppland Sweden (Uppsala), Rhenish glass and glass from the Ardennes, notably funnelled cups and pearls, were found, the latter being also manufactured in Ribe itself, perhaps by a wandering artisan.

Whereas these were luxury goods, the same is certainly not true for the black quern-stones, manufactured from the lava pits at Niedermendig, near Mayen, and shipped on the Rhine northward from the embarkment port of Andernach.<sup>34</sup> They were of one type (40–50 cm in diameter), from England to Jutland, where their fragments have been found in all the *emporía*. In England, where even King Offa (as appears from a letter of Charlemagne to him) was interested in what were called the ‘black stones’ (*petrae nigrae*),<sup>35</sup> they were distributed over the countryside, mostly in south-east England. There is no doubt that they were shipped and traded by Frisians. Many hundreds of fragments were found in Dorestad, more than enough for just domestic use. Their manufacture stopped shortly after the beginning of the ninth century. Although the famous Frankish swords, with decorated grip and blade with inscriptions, manufactured in the Meuse and Rhine region (Cologne), have been found all over Europe, they were particularly cherished in Scandinavia.<sup>36</sup> It is, however, difficult to prove that they came there as a product of commerce, for except at Dorestad, they were not found in the *emporía* and may have reached the Scandinavian and also the south-east English countryside as loot brought home by Vikings. Moreover one should not forget that an interdiction on weapon export from the Frankish empire was repeated often in the capitularies of Charlemagne and his successors.

Textiles have left little or no archaeological traces at all. Apart from some fragments found in excavations in Birka, Kaupang and

<sup>33</sup> Lebecq, *Marchands frisons*, I, pp. 31–2; II, pp. 131–3.

<sup>34</sup> Steuer, ‘Handel aufgrund archäologischer Zeugnisse’, pp. 142–6.

<sup>35</sup> Hodges, *Towns and Trade*, pp. 64–6 mentions another interpretation of the ‘*petrae nigrae*’.

<sup>36</sup> Steuer, ‘Handel aufgrund archäologischer Zeugnisse’, pp. 151–6.

Hedeby, the idea that textiles must have been the object of trade relations between the Frankish empire, England and Scandinavia is based on some fortuitous allusions in written sources. Best known are the mentions of *pallia Fresonica* and *saga Fresonica* in the *Gesta Karoli* of Notker Balbulus, the monk and story-teller of St Gall around 886–7.<sup>37</sup> They consisted of various colours and are considered by most specialists as luxury cloth, the quality of which was fine enough to be offered by Charlemagne to Harun ar-Rashid, the caliph of Baghdad. The poem dedicated in the 820s by Ermold the Black to Pipin, king of Aquitaine, expressly states that merchants brought from Frisia into Alsace coats of various colours. After many polemical discussions started by Pirenne, for whom Frisian cloth had been manufactured in Flanders and only been transported by Frisian merchants, Stéphane Lebecq, the French specialist of Frisian history, concluded, on archaeological grounds, that these textiles had been manufactured in Frisia itself. Some authors before him had argued that they had been exported from England to the continent by Frisians. Their arguments, apart from the Frisian question, prove that English textiles were indeed exported to the continent. In his famous letter to Offa, king of Mercia, from shortly after 796, Charlemagne, in exchange for his intervention concerning the ‘black stones’ asked for by Offa, asks the latter that the coats exported from England into Francia should again have their usual length. Perhaps less famous but no less significant in this context, is a gift to the abbey of St Bertin in 800 of a sum of money to buy cloth for shirts from overseas called *bernicrist* in vernacular (*drappos ad kamisias ultromarinas que vulgo bernicrist vocitantur*).<sup>38</sup>

Frankish trade with central and eastern Europe must be situated in a different political and military context than that with England or even Scandinavia, mainly because the frontier on this side of the empire, formed through central and south-east Germany by the rivers Elbe, Saale and Donau, was not only a political one but also a military frontline, the control of which was very strict. There is evidence in different capitularies, especially in that of Thionville (805), of trade control and probably also tolls in different places on these rivers, from Bardowiek and Magdeburg on the Elbe, Erfurt, Hallstadt and Forcheim on the Saale, to Regensburg and Lorch on the Donau.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Lebecq, *Marchands frisons*, pp. 131–4.

<sup>38</sup> Maurits Gysseling and Anton Koch (eds.), *Diplomata belgica ante annum millesimum centesimum scripta* (Tongeren, 1950), p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> Johannes Fried, *Franken und der Handel*, pp. 15–18, 37.

More specifically the sale and smuggling of coats of mail called *brunia*, was severely repressed. The situation was less tense at the south-eastern border of the empire, east of Bavaria, at the eastern frontier of the so-called Ostmark, a Frankish military buffer territory against the Avars. The situation in this corner of the empire is well known from the inquiry from 903–5 concerning the toll of Raffelstetten, which we studied above from the point of view of inter-regional trade. It provides evidence of import by Czechs and Russians of slaves, horses and wax, that came via a route Kiev–Cracow–Prague. Most of these imports were directed via Arlberg to Walenstadt on the Walensee in north-east Switzerland and from there over one of the ‘Bündner’ passes to Venice, as I made clear in my overview on the international trade position of Venice.

#### CONCLUSION

To conclude it can be stated that inter-regional trade was more important than the international commerce of the Carolingian empire. The latter was concentrated in places along the frontier of the Frankish empire, where important royal tolls were established, and in the theoretically Byzantine cities and territories of Italy, most of all in Venice. There is not much information about the goods imported and exported in southern Europe: the main export to the former Byzantine possessions in Italy and from there to Muslim North Africa consisted of slaves; the export of slaves from north-west Europe via some cities in southern France to Muslim Spain was equally important; the import of oriental spices, perfumes and silk via Venice and some other formerly Byzantine ports in Italy and from Muslim Spain to the Provence may not be overestimated.

In Europe north of the Alps and the Loire, the international circuit was much interwoven with inter-regional trade, especially on the Rhine, from the Alps to Dorestad, the main gateway to Scandinavia. Exports to Scandinavia, consisting of glass ware, ceramics, quern-stones and textiles were more important than imports from Scandinavia, of which we know nearly nothing. Trade with England, through Quentovic and *Walichrum*–Domburg and also through Dorestad, was more an extension of inter-regional trade, with exports of mainly wine and ceramics and quern-stones to England and with imports of textiles from England to the continent.



Compared with international commerce, inter-regional trade movements are not only much better documented, especially thanks to written sources rather than archaeological evidence (except ceramics and quern-stones), but this superiority corresponds to a reality that is most visible in northern France, the Low Countries and the Rhineland – the heartlands of the Carolingian empire. Inter-regional commerce, which was much more important than earlier scholars, especially Pirenne, would have us believe, had its roots in the great estates of those regions. They produced a surplus of grain, wine and salt that were the main basic commodities transported over the rivers Rhine, Loire, Seine, Meuse, Moselle and Main. The best explanation of this commercial flowering in north-west Europe during the Carolingian period, which in the end must have stimulated international exports to England and Scandinavia, is the dynamism of the Carolingian manorial economy and its merchant class. This consisted mainly of Frisian merchants who were at the service of this economy and its mainly ecclesiastical masters but at the same time had been left enough freedom for their own profitable operations.

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