
REVIEW ARTICLES

Recent Research on Levantine Trade

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This paper is a continuation of a previous survey of this branch of research in the economic history of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period. While the earlier paper dealt with books and articles published in the years 1965-1972, the present paper will survey those printed in the years 1973-1982.

The output of research in this field during the last ten years was fairly large. A not insignificant number of sources have been printed and various scholarly books and papers dealing with all aspects of European trade with the Levant have been published. They are written in many languages and, of course, their levels vary. However, to a great extent, the quality of the research depends on the character of the sources available. Surveying the research on Levantine trade in the last decennium, one soon becomes aware of considerable differences between the solidity of books and papers dealing with East-West trade in the later Middle Ages and the shakiness of theses put forward in some of those analysing the sparse data concerning Levant trade in the early Middle Ages.

a) *The Pre-Crusade Period*

Several learned treatises published in the last decade, focus, of course, on the well-known controversy regarding the character of East-West trade in the period subsequent to the Arab conquests.

In a well-documented and interesting paper, Archibald Lewis¹ clarifies the

¹ *Recent research on Levantine trade*, JEEH II (1973), p. 187 ff.

² *Mediterranean maritime commerce: A.D. 300-1100, shipping and trade*, (in) "25a Settimana di studio", Centro Italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 1977 (Spoleto 1978), pp. 481-501.

changing character of East-West trade in the successive ages of this long period. After the conquest of Justinian, the Mediterranean trade flourished and security was so good that it was not necessary for ships to sail in convoys. In the period after the death of Mohammed, the unity of the Mediterranean was split into two, the Christian and Moslem empires. In other words, the author of the paper accepts the Pirenne thesis. But, on the other hand, he follows Lombard in maintaining that the Moslem countries had to import timber and slaves from Christian Europe. In a lecture given at a congress in New York, even Cl. Cahen agrees with many of the conclusions of Pirenne but challenges the assumption of a Christian Occident confronting a united Caliphate.³ However, much data in Arabic sources show that there was intense commercial exchange among the Moslem countries in that period despite the break-up of the Caliphate in the ninth and tenth centuries.⁴ On the other hand, Cahen severely criticizes the thesis of St. Bolin referring to the interdependence of monetary development in the Caliphate and the Carolingian empire. H. Ahrweiler, in a lecture about the Byzantine ports in the Dark Ages,⁵ emphasizes the fact that piracy and the depopulation of coastal towns in the Central and Western Mediterranean had begun before the Arab conquests. This thesis was supported by other scholars a long time ago, but Mme. Ahrweiler also puts forward another thesis, maintaining that the Arab conquests compelled the Byzantines to adopt a policy of an Empire-fortress, concentrating upon the fight against the Moslems, so that the merchant navy and sea-borne trade had to be neglected to a great extent. In a paper on the trade of Byzantium with the Christian Occident in the Dark Ages, R.S. Lopez⁶ emphasizes the Byzantines' need to acquiesce in the impossibility of frustrating the Western traders' efforts to export fine cloth. Consequently they established, at the end of the ninth century, or at the beginning of the tenth century, the "mitata" of Constantinople, to supervise the activities of the traders.

The only group of merchants who engaged in trade between the Levant and Western Europe in the early Moslem period, according to all economic historians, were the Rādhānites. As our knowledge of these merchants is

³ *Commercial relations between the Near East and Western Europe from the VIIIth to the XIth centuries*, (in) "Islam and the Medieval West, aspects of intercultural relations", ed KH. I. SEMAAN (Papers presented at the 9th Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, State Univ. of New York at Binghamton, 1975) (State Univ. of N.Y. Press, Albany 1975), pp. 1-25.

⁴ See my paper *Essai sur les prix et les salaires dans l'empire califien*, "Riv. degli Studi Orientali", 36 (1961), p. 26 ff.

⁵ *Les ports byzantins (VII-IX siècles)*, (in) "25a Settimana di studio", Centro It. di studi sull'alto medioevo, pp. 259-283.

⁶ *Foreigners in Byzantium*, (in) "Miscellanea offert à Ch. Verlinden", (Ghent 1975), pp. 341-352.

mainly based on the account of one Arabic geographer, various interpretations of their identity and their commercial activities are possible. M. Gil accepts the explanation of their name given more than a hundred years ago by the French orientalist Barbier de Meynard: they were called after Rādhān, a locality East of the Tigris. They were Jews hailing from Rādhān and settled in Baghdad.⁷ The author of the paper was apparently not aware of the fact that according to the Arabic sources the district of Rādhān was already depopulated in the eighth century. One might also ask why these Jewish traders supposedly living in Baghdad were not called Baghdadis. Against Gil, the German orientalist J. Jacobi substantiates, in two papers, the interpretation he gave of the name in a paper published in 1971.⁸ Rāh-dār was, according to him, an expression of the administrative language of the caliphate and meant "those who know the trade routes and can supply information". The description given of their routes does not refer to travels of a single merchant but of the group as a whole. The author of the present survey tries to show, in a paper about their intercontinental trade,⁹ that the account of Ibn Khurdādhbih belongs to the first edition of his work dating to 846. The hoards of Moslem coins unearthed in Russia and the Baltic countries show that from the second half of the IXth century these Jewish merchants carrying on trade with Eastern Europe preferred the Southern route leading to the basin of the Lower Volga. The report of Ibn Khurdādhbih about the sale by the Rādhānites of Oriental commodities to the king of the Franks is supported by the interpretation of Carolingian documents given by F. Rösig and B. Blumenkranz. Another major problem of European trade with the Levant in the Dark Ages is the flourishing and the decline of Amalfi. Even this subject has been dealt with in the last decade by some excellent historians. Barbara M. Kreutz, in a very interesting paper, dwells on the innovations made by the Amalfitans in European shipping.¹⁰ According to her the Amalfitans built ships similar to those of the Arabs. They used skeleton-first method in the construction of ships (whereas the Romans built ships without preliminary framework) and demonstrated to the Christian West the usefulness of the lateen sail for trans-Mediterranean seafaring. The Arabs copied the lateen sail from them. As to the chronology of Amalfitan

⁷ *The Rādhānite merchants and the land of Rādhān*, JESHO 17 (1974), pp. 299-328.

⁸ *Antwort auf einige Fragen über die Rādāniya*, "Der Islam", 52 (1975), pp. 226-238; IDEM, *Bemerkungen zur Etymologie der Rādāniya*, "Folia Orientalia", 17 (1976), pp. 175-188.

⁹ E. ASHTOR, *Aperçus sur les Rādhānites*, "Revue Suisse d'histoire", 27 (1977), pp. 245-275.

¹⁰ *Ships, shipping, and the implications of change in the early medieval Mediterranean*, "Viator", VII (1976), pp. 79-109.

trade, a short but important paper of M. Balard should be mentioned.¹¹ He emphasizes that the role of the Amalfitans in a conflict and riots in Constantinople in 944, when they took part in fighting, proves that in that period they already had a big colony there. The question why Amalfitan trade declined in the period of the Crusades, a problem discussed by many scholars, is again taken up by Cl. Cahen in another paper.¹² According to him the Amalfitans, who supplied the Moslems with iron, timber hides and textiles before the Crusades enjoyed a true monopoly in the Levant trade. They carried on their trade in cooperation with Jewish merchants. These conclusions, however, are not supported by the evidence of documents. The *geniza* records do not point to Amalfitan supremacy in Levant trade, and documents of Southern Italy indicate that the Jewish communities of this region consisted of craftsmen.¹³ The decline of Amalfi's international trade, Cahen believes, was the effect of the great upswing of that of the merchant republics of Northern Italy, as well as of the town's conquest by the Normans. This latter conclusion is categorically contested by all the specialists of South Italian history who emphasize that Amalfitan trade did not come to a standstill after the town had been annexed to the Norman dominions. This fact has been clearly pointed up by E. Pontieri and G. Galasso and, recently, by A.O. Citarella.¹⁴ Even he does not consider the loss of independence as the death blow for Amalfi's international trade, although he emphasizes that the Norman expansion aroused great enmity towards the Christians among the Moslems and made trade with them very difficult. The true reason for Amalfi's decline, however, could be the impossibility of competing with Genoa, Pisa, and Venice. Even this interpretation of the problematical phenomenon is not satisfactory. Why could not the Amalfitans continue trade alongside the Venetians and Genoese, providing Southern Italy with Oriental commodities? Probably the old interpretation, namely that Amalfi's decline was brought about by its conquest by the Normans, is still preferable. When the Amalfitans, after becoming subjects of the Normans, lost their position in Byzantium, the volume of their trade dwindled progressively, just as it had begun to flourish thanks to its links with the Eastern Empire.

The role the Jews played in the trade with the Levant is also a problem not

¹¹ *Amalfi et Byzance, X'-XII' siècles*, (in) "Travaux et memoirs", (of the) Centre de recherche d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance VI (Paris 1976), pp. 85-95.

¹² *Le commerce d'Amalfi dans le Proche-Orient musulman avant et après la croisade*, Académie des inscriptions & belles lettres, Comptes Rendus 1977, pp. 291-300.

¹³ See GORTIN, *Med. Society*, I, p. 318 and see my paper *Gli ebrei nel commercio* (cf. below), p. 422 f.

¹⁴ *Il declino del commercio marittimo di Amalfi*, "Archivio Storico per le Prov. Nap.", 92 (1975), pp. 9-54.

yet sufficiently clarified. The elaboration of the *geniza* records of course does shed new light on it.

An important contribution to this sector of research has been made by S. D. Goitein, who published an English translation of 80 Judaeo-Arabic *geniza* documents, most of them merchant letters. Forty-three of these documents date from the XIth century and 25 from the XIIth.¹⁵ The learned author discusses the question of how the "geniza", containing about 7000 commercial documents, came into being and shows that its greatest part stems from the archives of some outstanding merchants or firms, such as Joseph b. Jacob Ibn Aukal or Nahray b. Nissim (from whom 300 letters have been preserved). The choice of the records translated by Goitein, and the notes provided by him are very good. So all those who are not familiar with Judaeo-Arabic will be very grateful to this veteran Orientalist. Errors of translation and interpretation are of course unavoidable when dealing with texts so difficult to read and to understand.¹⁶ But the author makes some sweeping statements not warranted by the documents. Goitein is sure (p.15) that the office of consul developed from that of the "wakil at-tudjdjâr" the "representant of the merchants", who is so often mentioned in the *geniza* records of the XIth century. But these "representants" were private agents, who sometimes obtained an authorization from the Moslem government. They were not officers representing their governments. What matters much more, however, is the professional background of the author: his being an Orientalist and not an economic historian is strongly felt (but could a scholar who has not the philological training of Goitein accomplish this work?). Facts that are mentioned in the texts and have a great importance for the study of economic history are overlooked or not emphasized, and there is no comparison of the conditions of trade with those reflected in thousand of documents of the later Middle Ages. As in the XIVth-XVth centuries, many firms were family enterprises (p. 13), sons of merchants were sent abroad to learn the profession (p. 279, 330). Even the merchant letters are similar to those found in the Datini archives; that is, there is the same kind of information and the lists of prices. The procedure of the transactions is the same as in the period subsequent to the Crusades: much of the commodities are sold by auction, in which the initial prices are fixed, just as in the later Middle Ages.¹⁷

The letters of Joseph b. Jacob Ibn 'Aukal, a merchant living at the end of the Xth and the beginning of the XIth century, are probably the oldest

¹⁵ *Letters of Jewish traders*, translated from the Arabic with introduction and notes., Princeton Univ. Press, 1973.

¹⁶ Cf. my observations in RSI 87 (1975), p. 324 ff.

¹⁷ See p. 58 no. 12, where the author did not understand the meaning of wayukta' bi...: the prices are fixed by the authorities at ... The expression kata' a bi 's-si' r (translated by the Italians 'rompere la voce') occurs in many documents referring to the auctions in the post-Crusade period.

business archives in the Cairo geniza. Sixty-one items from the 990s to the year 1038 have been found. N.A. Stillman, a pupil of Goitein, presents to the English reader a summary of the content of these letters,¹⁸ which faithfully depict Ibn 'Aukal's trade with Spain and Egypt. He exported copper, lead, coral, and olive oil from Spain and silk from Sicily to the Near East. The paper also contains tables with many data, some of them, however, without any value. What is the sense of compiling tables of commodities traded when the quantities are lacking? The present author sketches in a paper (first a lecture at a Spoleto conference)¹⁹ the gradual decline of the Jews' role in East-West trade. Their share in the trade between Europe and the Levant decreased, as they could not supply the Moslem with iron and timber available to the Venetians and other Italian merchants. In the eleventh century, Jewish merchants of the Moslem countries were still very active, but rarely visited Christian ports. They had no share in the trade of slaves, timber, iron, grains or African gold.

Finally, mention should be made of two papers that deal with general problems of East-West trade in the pre-Crusade period. Both of them were originally lectures given at the conference on navigation in the early Middle Ages, which was held in Spoleto in 1977.

The paper of Cl. Cahen about the ports in the Moslem Levant²⁰ is utterly deceiving. In the works of the Arabic geographers there is plenty of information on this subject, so that putting together these data with those to be found in the geniza letters a full picture would emerge. But this paper contains only some data picked up hastily. A paper of A.L. Udovich deals with the duration of sea travels in that period.²¹ The author undertakes to prove that development of nautical knowledge in the Dark Ages did not result in substantial changes in the duration of travel. In fact, according to this author, this factor did not change from classical antiquity to the XVIth century (p. 508 f.). Three to four weeks were necessary to cross half of the Mediterranean (p. 513). Further Udovich concludes that merchants did not participate in the ownership of vessels (p. 520). This and other statements should be accepted *cum grano salis*. Data collected by the late F. Melis from the Datini letters show that at the end of the XIVth century it took 32 days to travel from

¹⁸ *The eleventh century merchant house of Ibn 'Aukal*, JESHO 16 (1973), pp. 15-88.

¹⁹ *Gli ebrei nel commercio mediterraneo nell'alto medioevo (sec. X-XI)*, "26a Settimana di Studio", Centro It. di studi sull'alto medioevo, 1978 (Spoleto 1980), pp. 401-464.

²⁰ *Ports et chantiers navals dans le monde méditerranéen musulman jusqu'aux croisades*, "25a Settimana di studio", Centro It. di studi sull'alto medioevo, pp. 299-313.

²¹ *Time, the sea and society: duration of commercial voyages on the Southern shores of the Mediterranean during the high Middle Ages*, "25a Settimana di studio", etc., pp. 503-546.

Majorca to Alexandria and 35 from Barcellona.²² What the author says about the ownership of merchantmen was true for Jewish merchants only.

b) *The Period of the Crusades*

The number of the treatises published in the last decade about the Levantine trade in the period of the Crusades is much smaller than those dealing with the trade in the earlier period.

It is worthwhile to mention first another paper of Archibald Lewis that sketches the development of international trade of the Near East during this and the subsequent period.²³ Interesting though the conclusions of the author are, some of his statements must arouse contradictions. Egypt's conquest by the Fatimids was not the beginning of a period in which its trade was in deficit. In support of this statement, Lewis quotes a passage in a book of Lapidus referring to Egyptian economy in the second half of the XIIth century,²⁴ and even this assumption is untenable. Neither can one subscribe to the author's statement that Saladin discouraged non-Moslems (meaning here Europeans) from engaging in trade with Egypt and increased the customs they had to pay.²⁵ In contradiction to this statement of Lewis, European trade with Egypt flourished in the days of Saladin and his successors. In a well-documented paper, J. Riley-Smith deals with the privileges granted the South European merchants by the Crusader principalities and the customs they had to pay.²⁶ The purpose of his paper is to point out that the Crusader princes did not lavishly or carelessly grant privileges to the "merchant nation". They did not give up the imposts on the import or the export of some basic commodities and, secondly, the exemptions applied to half of the dues only. In any case, the custom dues in the Crusader principalities were, according to the author's conclusions, generally lower than the Egyptian khums (of 20%) but often higher than the Byzantine komerkion (of 10%). Another question that has a bearing on the Levant trade in that period as a whole is dealt with in a

²² *Intensità e regolarità nella diffusione dell'informazione economica generale nel Mediterraneo e in Occidente alla fine del medioevo*, "Mélanges en l'honneur de F. Braudel", (Toulouse 1973) I, p. 405.

²³ *Les marchands dans l'océan indien*, "Revue d'histoire écon. et sociale", 54 (1976), pp. 441-475.

²⁴ I.M. LAPIDUS, *Muslim cities in the later Middle Ages*, Harvard Univ. Press 1967, p. 23.

²⁵ See my paper *Saladin and the Jews*, HUCA 27 (1956), p. 309.

²⁶ *Government in Latin Syria and the commercial privileges of foreign merchants*, (in) D. BAKER (ed.), *Relations between East and West in the Middle Ages* (Edinburgh 1973), pp. 109-122.

thorough study of M.-L. Favreau.²⁷ The author shows that piracy increased in the Eastern Mediterranean in the XIIth century, when Byzantium had to reduce its naval forces because of lack of funds. In fact all the Italian merchant republics engaged in piracy, but the Pisans were the most active. Pilgrim ships, like merchantmen, were also attacked. Christian piracy went on in Syrian waters until the fall of the last Crusader town. The solid paper of Mrs. Favreau is based on a cautious interpretation of the texts, but she would have done better to try to distinguish between corsairs and pirates. Further, she draws conclusions from the repetition of undertakings to curb piracy in successive treaties between Crusader princes and South-European merchants. Is it certain that these texts always testify to the actual conditions? How often were obsolete clauses repeated in these treaties?

Other papers deal with the Levant trade of certain commercial towns of Southern Europe in the period of the Crusades.

D. Abulafia continues the revision of the history of the Levant trade of Marseilles, initiated by H.E. Mayer.²⁸ He shows²⁹ that at the beginning of the XIIth century the leading firms of Marseilles, such as the Manduel, did not invest substantial sums in the trade with the Levant. In addition, Abulafia brings out the fact that the Provençal traders exported considerable quantities of Western commodities to the Levant. From the end of the XIIth century, the author concludes, silver as means of payment in the Levant is replaced by cloth to a great extent. In the middle of the XIIIth century the trade of Marseilles in the Levant flourished, but Abulafia cautions against considering the deeds referring to the trip of the *S. tus Spiritus* in 1248 as typical of the volume of its Levant trade at that time. For this ship had an exceptionally rich cargo. This great commercial expedition is the subject of a paper by R.K. Berlow.³⁰ He makes a comprehensive study of the 132 commenda contracts referring to the trip the ship made in 1248 to Acre. The author undertakes to show that granting a quarter of the profits to the travelling merchants, as done in these contracts, was a rather generous payment in view of the conditions prevailing (expenditure of labour by the traveller, anticipated return of investment). Another paper of D. Abulafia deals with the Levant trade of S. Gimignano.³¹ That the merchants of S. Gimignano, in the Middle Ages a centre

²⁷ *Die italienische Levante-Piraterie und die Sicherheit der Seewege nach Syrien im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert*, VSWG 65 (1978), pp. 461-510.

²⁸ *Marseilles' Levantehandel und ein akkonensisches Fälscheratelier des 13. Jahrhunderts*, Tübingen 1972.

²⁹ *Marseilles, Acre and the Mediterranean, 1200-1291*, (in) "Coinage in the Latin East", *The Fourth Oxford Symposium on Coinage and Monetary History*, ed. by P.W. Edbury and D.M. Metcalf (Oxford 1980), pp. 19-39.

³⁰ *The Sailing of the "Saint Exprit"*, JEH 39 (1979), pp. 345-362.

³¹ *Crocuses and Crusaders: San Gimignano, Pisa and the kingdom of Jerusalem*, (in) "Outremer, Studies in the history of the Crusading kingdom of Jerusalem presented to Joshua Prawer" (Jerusalem 1982), pp. 227-243.

of saffron plantations producing for export, were very active in the Near East in the XIIIth century is a fact that clearly emerges from documents now preserved in the State Archives of Florence. R. Davidsohn has studied them and published excerpts in his *Forschungen*. Abulafia raises the question of how the merchants of S. Gimignano could appear in the Levant as Pisans and concludes that there were no formal agreements to this effect between the two towns. But the Pisans had a great interest in absorbing the merchants of S. Gimignano because of the latter's great experience in the Levant and their capital. Consequently the Pisans encouraged them to claim Pisan privileges in the ports of Syria. The relationship between commercial methods in the Levant trade in the period of the Crusades and the social development of a great commercial town is the subject of a paper of S. Borsari.³² In the course of the XIIth century, according to the author, there was in Venice a great upswing in the economic and social status of the bourgeoisie, who used new methods in the trade with Byzantium, mainly the sea-loan (instead of the traditional *colleganza*). Not a few of the new rich were absorbed by new aristocratic families. On the other hand, the nobility of Venice went on trading.

An event that was very important in the history of Venice's international trade and closely connected with its Levant trade is discussed in a booklet of K. E. Lupprian — the foundation of the *Fondaco dei Tedeschi*.³³ In this very thorough study the author maintains that the Fondaco of the Germans, the great exchange through which the Levantine commodities passed to Central Europe, was modelled after the Fondachi the Venetians had in Constantinople and Alexandria. But there was a fundamental difference: it had no self-administration. It was founded between 1222 and 1225 and, at the beginning, its administration was rented, and later, from 1268, it was run by the Venetian government itself. In other words, Lupprian arrives at a conclusion contrary to the opinion held by Simonsfeld and Cessi-Alberti, who believed that it was administered from the beginning by the Venetian State. The administration of the Fondaco by the Republic was in unison with the closing of the Great Council. Both were measures taken by the merchant-aristocracy to make sure that economic and political rule would be exercised by their class as a whole and not by a few clans. From then on, the Fondaco was administered according to the same rules.³⁴

³² *Per la storia del commercio veneziano col mondo bizantino nel XII secolo*, RSI 88 (1976), pp. 104-126.

³³ *Il fondaco dei Tedeschi e la sua funzione di controllo del commercio tedesco a Venezia* (Quaderni of the Centro Tedesco di studi veneziani, no. 6), Venice 1978.

³⁴ The second part of Lupprian's treatise contains these rules. — See also K.-E. LUPPRIAN, *Zur Entstehung des Fondaco dei Tedeschi in Venedig*, (in) "Festschrift für Peter Acht" (Munich 1976), pp. 128-134.

c) *Research on Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages in General*

Among studies covering various regions and periods of Levant trade in the Middle Ages, the work of J. Madurell Marimón and A. García Sanz should be mentioned first.³⁵ This is a careful edition of 255 commercial deeds stretching from the year 1236 to 1501. Many of them refer to trade with the Moslem Levant. The texts are preceded by thorough research on the development of the commenda contract in Barcelona, mainly its juridical aspects.

That great problem in the history of Levant trade, the question of the balance of payments, has been taken up in the last decade first by R. S. Lopez and later by the Swedish scholar A. Attman. The thesis of Lopez³⁶ might be summed up as follows: whereas the balance of payment of the Roman Empire with the Asiatic countries had been in deficit, in the High Middle Ages (VIth-XIIth centuries), Europe, although an underdeveloped region, compared with the Byzantine and Moslem empires, exported more than it bought from them. Then, in the XIth-XIIth centuries there was a considerable increase in the import of costly commodities from the Near East to Europe and as, on the other hand, fewer slaves were available for export, the balance of payment again became negative for Europe, even more than in Roman times. But there were two reasons one could go on trading with the Levant: probably gold was imported from North-Western Africa and, secondly, the Byzantine empire was exploited in terms of privileges granted to the South-European merchant nations. The XIIth-XIVth centuries saw the triumph of the Europeans, who marketed great quantities of cloth and other textiles, sugar and glass in the Levant. The negative balance of the Moslem Levant is shown by the deterioration of its silver currency. In the XIVth century, the Italians bought a great deal in the Levant but they carried on a very profitable trade with other regions of Europe. This very interesting sketch has the merit of challenging response and will certainly be corrected. The export of European cloth, fustian and silk to the Near East, in the XIIIth century and in the first half of the XIVth century, reached a modest volume and the silver currency of the Mamluk kingdom, contrary to the conclusions of Lopez, enjoyed a great stability.³⁷ A different approach characterizes a book of the Swedish economic historian Attman.³⁸ This author would like to show that the pattern of

³⁵ *Comands comercials barceloneses de la baja edad media*, Barcelona 1973.

³⁶ *Il problema della bilancia dei pagamenti nel commercio di Levante*, (in) "Venezia e il Levante fino al secolo XV" (Atti del I Convegno int. di storia della civiltà veneziana, Venice 1968) I (Florence 1973), pp. 431-452.

³⁷ See my monograph *Les métaux précieux et la balance des paiements du Proche-Orient à la basse époque* (Paris 1971), p. 36 ff.

³⁸ A. ATTMAN, *The Bullion flow between Europe and the East 1000-1750*, Göteborg 1981 (Actae Reg. Soc. Scient. et Litt. Göteborg, Humaniora 20).

European trade with the Asiatic countries did not change from Roman times to the period of the French revolution: the Europeans bought from the Orientals certain precious commodities, mainly spices, and the balance of payments was always negative for the former so that they lost considerable amounts of specie. The chapters of Attman's book dealing with Levant trade in the Middle Ages will arouse some objections,³⁹ but the outline of the commercial exchanges between the European countries and the Near and Middle East in the Modern period is a good synthesis of the research done by several excellent economic historians, so that it is a useful, reliable and readable survey. The author distinguishes himself by a thorough knowledge of learned treatises, books and papers, written in many languages, and the interested reader will be grateful for the bibliographical data.

Numerous papers and books on the various phases of the Genoese and Venetian expansion have been published in the last decennium. Here a paper of M. Balard on the Genoese traffic in the Eastern Mediterranean should be noted.⁴⁰ The author studies the journals kept by the secretaries of some of the galleys that were fitted out by the Republic of Genoa in the late XIVth century. He analyzes the data concerning routes, stops, speed, and supply of food. Among his findings is the conclusion that a trip from Alexandria to Genoa took 23-29 days. F. C. Lane comes back to a subject about which he has published some very important books and papers — the history of Mediterranean seafaring and the role of the Venetians in it.⁴¹ The author shows the impact of technical changes and especially of improvements of nautical practice upon the social status of mariners. In the early Middle Ages the management of Venetian ships was characterized by "democracy", insofar as both passengers and seamen decided upon routes and ports of call. In later periods, when mathematical thinking, dead reckoning and the use of the compass widened the difference between those who could master the new techniques and others, the social differentiation between the crew and the patron and his assistants grew. Even the construction of bigger galleys in which 180 oarsmen were employed, resulted in the reduction of those who contributed only physical work to proletarians. But in the XVth century an additional differentiation took place: the ordinary galeotti were often debt slaves or were recruited from Dalmatians and Greeks, whereas the higher ranks of the crew were Venetians and comprised skilled and well-fed mariners.

Lane's history of Venice,⁴² a book which sums up the research of decades,

³⁹ See my view in *JEEH* 11 (1982), p. 759 ff.

⁴⁰ *Escales génoises sur les routes de l'Orient méditerranéen au XIV^e siècle*, (in) "Les grandes escales", *Recueils de la Société Jean Bodin* 32 (1974), pp. 243-264.

⁴¹ *Venetian seamen in the nautical revolution of the Middle Ages*, (in) "Venezia e il Levante fino al secolo XV", I, pp. 403-429.

⁴² *Venice, a maritime republic*, Johns Hopkins Univ. Press. 1973.

contains two chapters about Venetian commercial and political expansion in the Levant. In chapter VII, the author concludes that the wars between Venice and Genoa were much more the result of hate and vainglory than the outcome of economic competition. Lane rightly considers the convoy system as the mainstay of Venetian trade with the Levant and dwells on its advantages and defects. In chapter XI, Lane deals with the change of commercial methods in the period subsequent to the Crusades, when the travelling merchant was replaced by residents. The transition to the employment of these commercial agents (the *fattori*) was hastened by measures restricting the *colleganza*, and especially by a law designed to exclude foreign capital from Venetian trade with the Levant. After the reform of the Great Council (in 1297), the regulations aimed at reserving to the Venetians the profits from the Levant trade were tightened. But recourse to the service of resident agents was also facilitated by several improvements of commercial techniques, such as the spread of insurance, the bill of exchange, and others.⁴³ Surely this book is destined to a broad public, but even those who will not agree with some statements, e.g., the assumption that the employment of resident agents (instead of travellers) was a general phenomenon in the later Middle Ages, will appreciate it as a fine piece of mature scholarship.

A. Tenenti once more deals with the question of piracy in the Levant.⁴⁴ Having dwelt on the attitude of the Venetian Republic towards reprisals and to piracy, the author concludes that the great danger to Venetian shipping in the Mediterranean were the attacks by Catalan corsairs who had bases in Sicily and Rhodes. He believes, however, that Venetian shipping in the Levant did not suffer very much from corsairs and simple pirates (p. 750). But, on the other hand, Tenenti assumes that Venetian merchantmen were less protected than Genoese, Catalan, and Biscayan (p. 758). This assumption, contradictory to the first, looks unlikely. Many data point to the fact that Venetian ships were very efficiently protected by artillery.⁴⁵

d) *Trade with the Aegean and Black Sea Area in the Later Middle Ages*

There has been a great deal of research in this area of medieval Levant trade during the last decade, mainly thanks to the intense activities of the Genoese

⁴³ On this subject see also F.C. LANE, *Double entry bookkeeping and resident merchants*, *JEEH* VI (1977), p. 177 ff.

⁴⁴ *Venezia e la pirateria nel Levante: 1300 c.-1460 c.*, (in) "Venezia e il Levante fino al secolo XV", I, pp. 705-711. The author has already published two books on this subject: *Naufrages, corsaires et assurances maritimes à Venise 1592-1609* (Paris 1959), and *Venezia e i corsari, 1580-1615* (Bari 1961).

⁴⁵ See my paper *L'artiglieria veneziana e il commercio di Levante*, (in) "Armi e cultura nel Bresciano 1420-1870" (Brescia 1981), p. 141 ff.

scholars whose centre is the Institute of Palaeography and Medieval History of the University of Genoa. A not insignificant number of sources have been published and several learned treatises and books have come out.

A volume of documents published by B. Balbi and S. Raiteri⁴⁶ contains 83 acts of a notary of Caffa, from the years 1343-44, and 17 acts of two notaries of Licostomo, dating to 1373 and 1383-84. The notarial acts of Caffa contain rich information about the modalities of commercial transactions, exchange rates of various currencies, and other subjects. A very important collection of such documents is the volume of the acts of the notary Lamberto di Sambuceto, published by M. Balard.⁴⁷ This French historian prints the full texts of the deeds of this notary drawn up in Caffa and so far not yet published and gives a summary of those already published by Brătianu.⁴⁸ The volume contains altogether 903 documents. Besides the acts of these notaries, a new edition of another important source for the history of Genoese Levante trade should be mentioned here: that of the *Liber Gazariae* by G. Forcheri.⁴⁹ This text, which contains the rules laid down in 1317-1344 by the "Ufficio di Gazaria" concerning the shipping and administration of the Genoese colonies on the coasts of the Black Sea, was first published in the *Leges Municipales I* (within the *Hist. Patr. Monumenta*) in Turin in 1838, before, in part, by Pardessus in the fourth volume of his *Collection des lois maritimes* (Paris 1838) and later by V. Vitale (Genoa 1951). Forcheri also presents a critical analysis of this codex, comparing it with the shipping rules established in Venice and Marseilles and explaining their purposes.

Among the numerous papers that have been published in the last decade on Genoese trade and Genoese colonies overseas in the later Middle Ages, there is a very original article by G. Pistarino.⁵⁰ It is a discussion of notarial acts drawn up for Genoese merchants in Caffa, Kilia, Licostomo and Pera. The learned Genoese medievalist indicates what conclusions can be drawn from these documents concerning the methods of Italian trade in the Greek Levant and the life of the merchants overseas. A volume of L. Balletto⁵¹ contains twelve essays dealing with Genoese trade and Genoese colonies in the Black Sea area. These papers comprise an analysis of documents referring to trade routes, the character of the commodities traded, and the population of Caffa, the most

⁴⁶ *Notai genovesi in oltremare, atti rogati a Caffa e a Licostomo (sec. XIV)*, Genoa 1973.

⁴⁷ *Les actes de Caffa du notaire Lamberto di Sambuceto, 1289-1290 (Gênes et l'Outremer I)*, Paris-The Hague 1973.

⁴⁸ G. I. BRĂTIANU, *Actes des notaires génois de Pera et Caffa de la fin du XIII^e siècle (1281-1290)* (Bucarest 1927).

⁴⁹ *Navi e navigazione a Genova nel Trecento, Il Libro Gazarie*, Genoa 1974.

⁵⁰ *Mercanti del Trecento nel Levante genovese*, *Clio X* (Rome 1974), pp. 33-65.

⁵¹ *Genova, Mediterraneo, Mar Nero (sec. XII-XV)*, Genova 1976.

important Genoese colony in that region. All the papers are based on thorough research of notarial acts, but without referring to the documentation regarding the activities of other Mediterranean merchant nations and without comparing such documents with the Genoese sources.⁵² A volume of papers of G. Airaldi contains studies of the same type.⁵³ The author publishes and interprets various legal documents that shed light on the commercial activities and the life of the Genoese merchants in the colonies on the shores of the Black Sea. Included are contracts, promissory notes, appointments of attorneys, and inventories of bequests. Some very valuable papers are contained in the acts of a colloquium held in Bucharest in 1975 by Romanian and Genoese historians.⁵⁴ R.S. Lopez⁵⁵ dwells on the liberal attitude of the Genoese of Caffa who granted citizenship to almost everybody. This liberalism, truly exceptional in the Middle Ages, made possible the development of this great commercial centre. The author once again takes up a subject that aroused his interest a long time ago: the European trade with China in the XIVth century. As opposed to R.-H. Bautier, who had doubts about the economic importance of this intercontinental trade, Lopez expresses the opinion that it was a trade of great volume. Considerable capital was invested by the Genoese, and great quantities of silk were acquired in China. The Romanian scholar G. Papacostea⁵⁶ undertakes to show that the flourishing of Genoese trade on the route Lemberg-Moldavia-Maurocastrum at the end of the XIVth century was the consequence of the Polish-Lithuanian union of 1386. Trade on this axis was carried on in competition with that via Hungary-Transylvania-Valachia. The author also deals with the relations between the Moldavian princes and the Genoese in the period before the fall of Constantinople and in that preceding the conquest of Kilia and Maurocastrum by the Ottomans. G. Astuti contributes a very valuable paper on the organization of the Genoese colonies.⁵⁷ G. Petti-Balbi and Stefan Pascu review the research on the history of the Genoese colonies in the Black Sea region done by Genoese and Roumanian scholars.⁵⁸ The contributions made in the last decade by Genoese scholars to the research of the history of the Genoese colonies on the coast of the Black Sea comprise also

⁵² See my review in JEEH VIII (1979), p. 773 ff.

⁵³ *Studi e documenti su Genova e l'Oltremare*, Bordighera 1974.

⁵⁴ *Colloquio romeno-italiano: I genovesi nel Mar Nero durante i secoli XIII e XIV*, Bucharest 1977.

⁵⁵ *L'importance de la mer Noire dans l'histoire de Gênes*, pp. 13-33.

⁵⁶ *Caffa et la Moldavie face a l'expansion ottomane (1453-1484)*, pp. 131-153.

⁵⁷ *Le colonie genovesi del Mar Nero e i loro ordinamenti giuridici*, pp. 87-129.

⁵⁸ *Gli studi genovesi sulle colonie del Mar Nero*, pp. 63-86; *La storiografia romena ed i Genovesi nel Mar Nero*, pp. 35-46.

a paper of G.G. Musso, who has been collecting data from the archives for many years.⁵⁹

Besides the books and papers published by Genoese scholars on the history of Genoese trade in the countries around the Aegean and the Black Sea, some important papers of M. Balard ought to be mentioned here. Two of them deal with Genoese trade and Genoese colonies on the Bulgarian coast of the Black Sea.⁶⁰ The author outlines the political history of the four colonies the Genoese founded in this region, viz. Vicina, Kilia, Licostomo and Maurocastrum (Cetatea Albă), and the commodities they exported, mainly cereals. The studies of Balard are based not only on the deeds drawn up by Genoese notaries, but also on the documents found in the archives of Francesco Datini in Prato. Another of M. Balard's very interesting contributions to the history of the Genoese expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean and the formerly Byzantine territories is a lecture about the ruling class in the Genoese colonies overseas.⁶¹ Balard shows that until the middle of the XIVth century the majority of the posts in the administration of the Genoese colonies of Pera and Caffa was held by noblemen, but they later lost the position of the only ruling class. However, the most striking feature of the history of the Genoese colonies is the great role played by the local élites. They took an active part everywhere in the administration of the colonies, had many conflicts with the office holders appointed by the government of the metropolis, and pursued a very vigorous policy serving the interests of their own colony.

The two-volume work of M. Balard on the Genoese colonies and Genoese trade in the formerly Byzantine territories⁶² is a great achievement of long and patient research made by a brilliant scholar. Data collected from thousands of notarial acts and other sources, such as the Datini papers, are cautiously weighed before conclusions are drawn. It goes without saying that the author has an excellent knowledge of research literature. R.-H. Bautier minimized the importance of the spice trade but Balard shows that from (about) 1270 certain quantities of Indian spices arrived in the ports of the Black Sea also, mainly in Trebizond and Constantinople, whereas Tana was a market for silk (p. 720).

⁵⁹ Gli Orientali nei notai genovesi de Caffa, (in) "Ricerche di archivio studi storici in onore di Giorgio Costamagna", (Fonti e studi di storia, legislazione e tecnica degli archivi moderni VIII), (Rome 1974), pp. 97-110.

⁶⁰ *Les Génois dans l'Ouest de la mer Noire au XIV^e siècle*, (in) "Actes du XIV^e congrès int. des études byzantines", Bucharest 1971 (Bucharest 1975) II, p. 21-32; *Les Génois et les régions bulgares au XIV^e siècle*, "Byzantino-Bulgarica", VII (1981), pp. 87-97.

⁶¹ *Les milieus dirigeants dans le comptoirs génois d'Orient (XIII^e-XV^e s.)*, (in) "Storia dei Genovesi", Atti del I convegno int. sui ceti dirigenti della repubblica di Genova 1981), pp. 159-181.

⁶² *La Romanie génoise*, vol. I-II, Genoa 1978 (Atti della Società Ligure Storia Patria, N.S. 18).

Even in the second half of the XIVth century, Caffa and Pera were markets for spices, although the supply was not regular. But, of course, the quantities of spices available in the Black Sea region at the end of the XIVth century were incomparably smaller than those offered in the Moslem Levant. The Genoese could obtain no more than 5% of the pepper there and other "gross spices" they acquired in Syria and Alexandria. In addition, pepper was more expensive in Caffa than in Genoa. In the XVth century the Genoese considerably increased their cotton purchases in Asia Minor because they could no longer compete with the Venetians in the export of cotton from Syria and Cyprus. Balard's work contains long chapters on the grain trade of the Genoese in the Black Sea region and also on the slave trade. He concludes that a great number of the male slaves were destined for work in agriculture and in workshops. The Genoese living in Pera and Caffa engaged mainly in regional trade (within the Black Sea-Aegean area); the exchanges between Caffa and Trebizond were intense. Direct trade between the Levant and Northwestern Europe began with the export of alum. The efforts made by the government of Genoa to oppose this trade, which kept clear of the metropolis and caused it a not insignificant loss of revenue were in vain. Highly interesting are Balard's conclusions concerning the rates of profit, obtained from the trade of various Oriental commodities. Trade with silk would have yielded no more than 10% on the average. That of alum and wax, as much as a third of the cost price. (Exactly the same results were obtained by Venetian merchants in Egypt and Syria at the end of the Middle Ages: the trade of bulky commodities, like cotton and alkali ashes, yielded much more than that of spices). The balance of payments with the formerly Byzantine territories was very favourable for the Genoese, especially when the income from services such as navigation are taken into account.

Venetian trade in the Black Sea area is the subject of several papers published in the course of the last years. An article of M. Nystazopoulou Pélékidis⁶⁰ is a broad sketch of its development through the Middle Ages. Whereas it is an almost generally accepted opinion that the Byzantines did not allow the Italian merchants to carry on trade in the Black Sea area, the author shows that by virtue of a privilege of 1161 the Genoese obtained this right. After the conquest of Constantinople by the Crusaders, the power of the Venetians became paramount there, but, according to the author, their commercial activities in this region were rather limited in the first half of the XIIIth century because its economic importance was small owing to the lack of security and the foundation of merchant colonies in the Crusader principalities

⁶⁰ *Venise et la mer Noire du XI^e au XV^e siècle*, (in) "Venezia e il Levante fino al secolo XV", I, pp. 541-582 (also in *Thesaurismata* VII, 1970, p. 7 ff.).

in Syria and Palestine. A great change was brought about by the Mongol conquests: the *pax mongolica* and the papal prohibition of trade with the Moslem Levant ushered in a new trend. Soon after the treaty of Nymphe the Venetians could return to the Black Sea and take up commercial exchanges with all the countries on its shores. The author concludes, however, that the Venetians did not have true colonies in Tana and Trebizond, but comptoirs (p. 565). Venice pursued a very consistent policy in this region, aimed at curbing Ottoman expansion (p. 572). Although this paper is mainly based on Thiriet's *Régestes*, it will be read with interest and profit.

The role of Tana, the most important centre of Venetian trade in that region, is the subject of a long paper of M. Birindei and G. Veinstein.⁴⁴ The purpose of the paper is to answer the question — what change was brought about by the conquest of Tana by the Ottomans in 1475? The authors elaborate the data contained in a *Kānun-nāme* of Sulaiman I of 1542/3, published by them⁴⁵ and another, unpublished, version of 1529. But they also deal extensively with the trade of Tana in the period in which it was still the seat of a Venetian colony. According to the authors, in the XIIIth century Tana did not become a point of support of the great international trade. The same would be true for Caffa. The very small number of data in the notarial acts (such as those of Lamberto di Sambuceto, published by Bratianu and Balard) referring to the trade of silk and spices, bear out this conclusion. In the days of Khan Uzbek (1312-1340) a change occurred. The manual of trade of Pegolotti and that of the anonymous Florentine in the MS. Marucelliana C. 226 depict Tana as the starting point of a great overland route to China. But although from 1332 Tana was a goal of the Venetian Romania Galleys, its place in Venetian world trade was modest. Only small quantities of silk were acquired in Tana. The conquest of the town by Timur in 1395 meant the end of its international trade (p. 134). But even before, the Venetian bought in Tana mainly fish (sturgeon) and furs, often bartered for textiles. Only the slave trade was large. This was also the character of trade in Tana (then Azak) when it became Turkish (p. 141, 154). In fact, the Venetian ships sailing the Black Sea carried on trade mainly between coastal ports. The authors are aware of the deficiency of their source material (p. 137) but obviously have relied too much on the *Régestes* of Thiriet. This is a collection of excerpts which is surely very useful but far from being complete and, when compared with the originals of the sources, not always reliable. If the authors had checked the *Régestes* of

⁴⁴ *La Tana Azaq, de la présence italienne à l'emprise ottomane (fin XIII^e milieu XVI^e siècle)*, (in) "Turcica", VIII (1976), pp. 110-201.

⁴⁵ *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, 16 (1975), pp. 57-104.

Thiriet against the originals, they would have modified not a few of their statements.⁶⁶

The policy of Venice vis-a-vis the Ottomans is once more dealt with by the German Turcologist, H.J. Kissling.⁶⁷ In fact the author deals with the general trend of Venetian policy in the Levant. The broad sketch of Venetian policy should render possible the understanding of the Venetian attitude towards the Ottomans. Kissling is inclined to believe that Venice was never interested in the total success of the Crusades because it would have meant the establishment of her competitors in the Levant. Rightly, the author emphasizes the fact that the Venetians carried on trade with Egypt in the reign of Saladin, who was not at all a ruler tolerant to non-Moslems (p. 365). So to remain on good terms with the Moslem rulers had been a leitmotif of Venetian policy through the ages, but when the Ottomans began to conquer the Balkans and threatened the coasts of the Adriatic, Venice had no choice. It had to support Scanderbeg and, on the other hand, Francesco Foscari embarked on the conquest of Lombardy.

S.P. Karpov, of the University of Moscow, has specialized in the history of Trebizond and published a series of papers based both on Byzantine and Venetian sources.⁶⁸ In a lecture given at a symposium in Birmingham and published in its acts, he deals with the privileges granted to the Venetians in Trebizond.⁶⁹ The paper focuses on the renewal of Venetian trade with Trebizond after its suspension from 1348 to 1363. Unlike Jorga, who believed that there was no Venetian expedition to Trebizond in 1364, Karpov concludes that there was such an expedition, but that it was not a military action but rather a diplomatic mission and that an agreement was reached with Alexius III. A chrysobull dated 1391 or 1395 should be redated to 1376. Then in 1396, the rights conferred upon the Venetians by this privilege were reenacted. The

⁶⁶ Thiriet neglected the proceedings of the Maggior Consiglio, see ASV (Archivio di Stato, Venice), M.C. Leona, f. 29b, 30a, 124b; Regina, f. 27b; see further Birindei-Veinstejn, p. 183 and cf. ASV, Senato, Misti 48, f. 1a: the two cogs going to Tana have very precious freights ("sunt multum divites"), omitted by Thiriet II, no. 1302 (quoted by B.-V.); p. 187 and cf. Misti 56, f. 16b: a proposal concerning the transport of slaves from Tana (omitted by Thiriet) and further Misti 56, f. 99a: the galleys were intended to anchor 9 days in Tana and sail to Trebizond (omitted by Thiriet II, no. 2056).

⁶⁷ *Venedig und der islamische Orient bis 1500*, (in) "Venezia e il Levante fino al secolo XV", I, pp. 361-387.

⁶⁸ For our subject the following are relevant: *Osobennoste razvitiya pozdnevizantijskogo goroda-emporiya, Trapezund v XIII-XV vv*, (in) "Vizantijskie Ocerki", III (1977), p. 79 ff. (About the development of Trebizond in the later Byzantine period); *Trapezundska imperi i russkie semli*, (in) "Vizantijski Vremenik", 38 (1977), p. 38 ff. (About political, commercial and religious relations of the empire of Trebizond with the Russian lands).

⁶⁹ *The empire of Trebizond and Venice in 1374-76* (a chrysobull redated), (in) "Twelfth Spring Symposium", 1978, Centre for Byzantine Studies, Univ. of Birmingham, 8 pp. (offprint with special pagination).

thesis of the author is well substantiated by the quotation of texts in the *Misti* of the Venetian Senate and the *Sindicati*. The sources elaborated by Thiriet are checked against the originals.

e) *Trade with the Moslem Levant in the Later Middle Ages*

Our knowledge of the history of this branch of the Levant trade has also been considerably increased in the last decennium, both by the publication of sources and of scholarly books and papers.

The Genoese medievalists have published two voluminous collections of notarial acts. R. Pavoni and V. Polonio published two volumes of acts drawn up by Lamberto di Sambuceto in Famagusta, where he exercised his profession from 1296 to 1307.⁷⁰ A hundred years ago, Desimoni had published 489 of his acts, dating to 26 December 1299-26 Dec. 1300, and 20 others have been printed by L. Balleto. The Institute of Palaeography and Medieval History of the University of Genoa plans to publish all the acts of this notary in eight volumes. The volume published by V. Polonio contains 426 deeds from 3 July 1300 — 3 August 1301, and that published by R. Pavoni contains 239 deeds dating to 6 July — 27 October 1301. It is almost needless to emphasize that these documents contain very rich information about European trade with the Levant in a period of crisis, when the Holy See was making great efforts to stop trade with the Moslems. The acts in these volumes contain much data concerning the commercial activities of merchants of Genoa, Venice, Montpellier, and Ancona. They show how the Levant traders succeeded, in various ways to continue their activities in Egypt and Syria despite the pressure brought on them by the Pope. The Genoese medievalists have rendered a very great service to historical research by the publication of these acts.

The Venetian archivists, with G. Lanfranchi at their head, have also made an important contribution to research in the history of Levant trade by publishing some volumes of notarial acts. A. Lombardo has published the acts of Nicola de Boateris, notary in Famagusta.⁷¹ The volume contains 185 acts drawn up in Cyprus in the years 1360-1362, that is the period subsequent to the renewal of direct trade with the Mamluk kingdom before the establishment of Genoese rule in Famagusta. These acts testify to the intense activities of merchants of Venice, Pisa, Florence, and Sicily. The first volume of the acts of Felice de Merlis, published by A. Bondi Sabellico, contains 28 deeds drawn up in Lajazzo in the years 1316-1318. They refer mainly to the trade between

⁷⁰ Both volumes have the title: *Notai genovesi in oltremare, atti rogati a Cipro da Lamberto di Sambuceto*, Genoa 1982.

⁷¹ *Nicola de Boateris, notaio in Famagosta e Venezia*, a cura di A. LOMBARDO, Venice 1973 (Fonti per la storia di Venezia, sez. III: archivi notarili).

Cyprus and Little Armenia.⁷² More important for our subject are the acts of Pietro Pizolo published by S. Carbone⁷³ in a volume that contains 710 acts drawn up in Candia, from January 31 to August 13, 1300. The number of the deeds of this notary is so great because many merchants, Venetians, Genoese, Anconitans, Catalans, traders of Zara and of Apulia, applied to him.

Of the many papers dealing with European Levant trade in this period, and (first a lecture) of M. Balard about Genoese trade with the Far East should be noted.⁷⁴ Along the lines of the research done in this field by R.S. Lopez and L. Petech,⁷⁵ the author, using unpublished documents, deals with the trade with China in the XIVth century when the Church had forbidden commercial exchanges with the Moslem Levant. He sketches the relations of the Genoese with the Tatars in Southern Russia and their activities in China and substantiates the opinion of Lopez (see above) that the Genoese bought great quantities of silk in China. He also shows that the Genoese travelled to China even in the 1360's, despite the hostilities between them and the Golden Horde.⁷⁶ G.G. Musso sums up the conclusions of his research in the archives of Genoa in a book about "Genoese navigation and trade with the Levant".⁷⁷ The author shows that in the later Middle Ages the "trading nations" of Southern Europe were in a virtually constant state of fear of mutual attack in the Southeastern Mediterranean. However, from time to time Catalans and Genoese concluded treaties or truce agreements. Musso also deals with the composition of the crews of Genoese ships, generally comprised of many Greeks and some negroes.⁷⁸ A valuable contribution to the history of Genoese

⁷² Felice de Merlis, *prete e notaio in Venezia ed Ayas, 1315-1348*, vol. I, a cura di A. BONDI SABELLICO, Venice 1973 (same series).

⁷³ Pietro Pizolo, *notaio in Candia*, vol. I, a cura di S. Carbone, Venice 1978 (same series).

⁷⁴ *Precursori di Cristoforo Colombo: i Genovesi in Estremo Oriente nel XIV secolo*, (in) "Convegno int. di studi colombiani", 1973 (Genoa 1974), pp. 149-164.

⁷⁵ *Les marchands italiens dans l'empire mongol*, "Journal Asiatique", 1962, p. 549 ff.

⁷⁶ A correction which should be made in this excellent paper refers to the identification of Andalo de Savignone: B.Z. KEDAR has convincingly shown that he is not identical with Andrea Franco, see his paper *Chi era Andrea Franco?*, "Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria", N.S. 17 (=91) (1977), p. 371 ff.

⁷⁷ *Navigazione e commercio con il Levante nei documenti dell'Archivio di Stato di Genova (secc. XIV-XV)*, Rome 1975.

⁷⁸ Two papers of the same author should also be mentioned: *I Genovesi e il Levante tra medioevo ed età moderna, ricerche d'archivio*, ed. R. BELVEDERI, II (Genoa 1976), pp. 65-183; *Armamento e navigazione a Genova tra il Tre e il Quattrocento* (appunti e documenti), (in) *Genova e commercio nell'evoluzione della marina genovese tra XV e XVII secolo*, publ. by Centro per la storia della tecnica in Italia, II (Genoa 1973), pp. 5-77 (contains inventories of the equipment of Genoese galleys and data for the knowledge of nautical terms).

trade in the Moslem Levant is the paper of B.Z. Kedar about Segurano Salvaygo, a Genoese merchant who supplied the sultan of Cairo with military slaves (mamluks).⁷⁹ Kedar's combination of data found in Arabic and Latin sources should serve as a model for research in this field.

To the history of Venice-Levant trade in the later Middle Ages, F.C. Lane has contributed a paper about "The Venetian Galleys to Alexandria, 1344".⁸⁰ The author points out what conclusions can be drawn concerning the development of the monetary system of the mediterranean countries in that period from the documents referring to the renewal of the Venetian galley traffic with Egypt. Venice was indeed a great bullion market. The conflict between Venice and Sigismund of Luxemburg, King of Hungary and Germany, who tried to divert the axis of Central Europe's trade with the Levant to an Eastern route leading to the coasts of the Black Sea, has been dealt with by W.V. Stromer in several papers. In a new paper, he sums up his research.⁸¹ The author believes that the attempt made by Sigismund to establish a new axis of Levant trade was not a priori hopeless. However, it could succeed only as far as precious commodities were concerned, and not for bulky ones such as the cotton worked by the fustian industry of Upper Germany. An objection to this conclusion of Stromer could be that the shipments of spices arriving in the Black Sea ports were probably not sufficient for the markets of Central Europe. The author of this review article, in a paper about Venetian trade in the Levant,⁸² tries to prove that at the end of the XIVth century and the beginning of the XVth century the Venetians had not yet reached supremacy on this artery of medieval world trade. The reasons for the great success of Venice in the XVth century was the efficiency of the galley systems and the decay of Levantine industries, such as those of textiles and sugar,⁸³ as well as the decline of the Levant trade of other South-European

⁷⁹ *Segurano-Šakrān Salvaygo: un mercante genovese al servizio dei sultani mamalucchi, c. 1303-1322*, (in) "Fatti e idee di storia economica nei secoli XII-XX", studi dedicati a Franco Borlandi (Bologna 1977), pp. 75-91.

⁸⁰ *Wirtschaftskäfte und Wirtschaftswege*, "Festschrift für H. Kellenbenz", I (Nürnberg 1978), pp. 431-440.

⁸¹ *Die Schwarzmeer- und Levante-Politik Sigismundus von Luxemburg und der Schwarzmeer-Handel oberdeutscher und hansischer Handelshäuser, 1385-1453*, (in) "Miscellanea offert à Ch. Verlinden", pp. 601-610.

⁸² *The Venetian supremacy in Levantine trade, monopoly or pre-colonialism* JEEH III (1974), pp. 5-53.

⁸³ About this subject see also E. ASHTOR, *L'exportation de textiles occidentaux dans le Proche Orient musulman au bas moyen âge*, (in) "Studi in memoria di Federigo Melis (Naples 1978), II, pp. 303-377; *Europäische Tuchausfuhr in die Mittelmeerländer im Spätmittelalter (1350-1500)*, Nürnberg 1982 (Univ. Erlangen-Nürnberg, Vorträge zur Wirtschafts- und Überseegeschichte 6); *Levantine sugar industry in the late Middle Ages, a case of technological decline*, (in) "The Islamic Middle East", Studies in economic history (Princeton 1981), pp. 91-132.

nations. Another paper of his is intended to emphasize the importance of the export of Syrian cotton for the Venice-Levant trade.⁵⁴ It was destined for the textile industries of Lombardy and Upper Germany.

Two papers discuss the volume of Levant trade in that period.⁵⁵ It seems that in some years at the end of the XIVth and the beginning of the XVth century the Venetians invested 400-450,000 dinars, or even more, (1 dinar = 1.25 duc.) in the trade with the Moslem Levant, but in other years the investment was only 300,000. From the middle of the XVth century the amount of their investment was about half a million ducats. From these estimates one may conclude that in the XVth century the volume of Venetian trade with Egypt and Syria had increased by 20-30%. According to the data in the Genoese customs registers in the 1370's, the Genoese invested 200-250,000 ducats a year in the Moslem Levant. The Datini papers of the last decade of the XIVth century point to the same amount.⁵⁶

The question of the ports from which Hungary and the adjacent countries of Central Europe imported Oriental commodities, mainly spices, at the end of the Middle Ages and at the beginning of the Modern period has been discussed by S.P. Pach in several papers.⁵⁷ For a long time it was believed that the Oriental articles arrived in Hungary by the Danube. Later, under the influence of Heyd's well-known work, this opinion was rejected and it was assumed that they were imported from Venice or via Dalmatia. Pach shows that at the end of the Middle Ages and at the beginning of the Modern period the commercial towns of Transylvania, Braşov (Kronstadt) and Sibiu (Hermannstadt) and others had close connections with the trading towns on the Black Sea, such as Braila and Kilia. Several privileges granted by the princes of Valachia and Bulgaria bear witness to the intensive trade carried on between these two regions. In the documents, pepper and other spices are mentioned as commodities imported into Transylvania from the Black Sea. Valachian

⁵⁴ *The Venetian cotton trade in Syria in the later Middle Ages*, "Studi Medievali", 17 (1976), pp. 675-715.

⁵⁵ *The volume of Levantine trade in the later Middle Ages*, JEEH IV (1975), pp. 573, 612; *Il volume del commercio levantino di Genova nel secondo Trecento*, Civico Istituto Colombiano (Genoa), Saggi e documenti I (Genoa 1978), pp. 391-432.

⁵⁶ Other papers of the same author: *Profits from trade with the Levant in the fifteenth century*, "Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies", 38 (1975), pp. 250-275; *Spice prices in the Near East in the XVth century*, "Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society", 1976, pp. 26-41.

⁵⁷ *La route du poivre vers la Hongrie médiévale*, (in) "Mélanges en l'honneur de F. Braudel" (Toulouse 1973) I, pp. 449-458; *Zur Geschichte des levantischen Pfefferhandels um 1500*, (in) "Festschrift H. Kellenbenz I", pp. 521-529; *Die Verkehrsrouten des Levantehandels nach Siebenbürgen und Ungarn zur Zeit der Könige Ludwig von Anjou und Sigismund von Luxemburg*, (in) "Europäische Städtgeschichte im Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit", ed. W. Mägdefrau (Weimar 1979).

merchants came to Transylvania offering spices. So Pach considers the opinion that Oriental spices were imported into Hungary exclusively from the Adriatic or via Austria to be untenable. The old -established trade went on after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople and of the Italian colonies on the Black Sea. Even in the second half of the XVth century and at the beginning of the XVIth century, the quantities of spices imported into Hungary from the Black Sea ports were much greater than those arriving there via Vienna-Pressburg. In another paper,⁸⁸ Pach dwells on the connection between the opinions expressed by historians about this problem and the political trends prevailing in successive periods.

f) *Levant Trade in the Sixteenth Century*

The Australian economic historian C. H. H. Wake has published a very interesting paper on the spice trade in the period subsequent to the discovery of the sea route to India.⁸⁹ Its purpose is to estimate the total of Europe's spice imports and their distribution between the Levant and Cape route. According to Wake, at the end of the XIVth century Europe imported 830-900 tons of pepper and 450 tons of other spices. The share Venetians had in these shipments would have been 60-70% of the pepper and 45% of the other spices. In the XVth century the volume of the import of most spices increased substantially, that of pepper less. The growth of European spice imports in the XVth century was 30-55%; the share of Venice in this import trade in the 1490's was 60-65%. But from 1510 its pepper trade virtually vanished. Dealing with the spice trade in XVIth century, Wake again discusses the reliability of contemporary reports of the Portuguese spice trade. Whereas Steensgaard accepted them, Magalhaes Godinho did not. Wake agrees with the latter. The cargo inventories include only the shipments owned by the Portuguese Crown or those who had Royal licences. Further, the monopoly of the Crown was enforced only as far as pepper was concerned, and the Portuguese carried on a lively private trade in other spices through the XVIth century. On the other hand, Portugal's trade with India was large even when Venice's Levant trade flourished again in the second half of that century. Around 1560-64 spice imports via the Cape still accounted for more than half of what arrived in Europe. Whereas Steensgaard maintains that European consumption of pepper and other spices increased considerably in the 1560's and the revival of the Levant trade kept pace with this increase, Wake believes that a great part of the

⁸⁸ *Le commerce du Levant et la Hongrie au Moyen Age Thèses, polémiques, arguments*, "Annales E.S.C.", 31 (1976), pp. 1176-1194.

⁸⁹ *The changing pattern of Europe's pepper and spice imports, ca. 1400-1700*, JEEH VIII (1979), pp. 361-403.

spices arriving in that period in the Near East was destined for the local markets. Wake's paper is not only the result of patient and thorough research but also has the merit of being a true challenge to further studies. However, his calculations and estimates of the volume of Levant trade at the end of the Middle Ages must arouse objections. They are based on mistaken conceptions of the systems of weights and standard parcels prevailing at that time in the Levant. Therefore, one must conclude that the growth of the Levant trade in the course of the XVth century was not so great as Wake believes.⁹⁰

U. Tucci has published a volume containing eight papers on Venetian economy and navigation in the XVIth century, some of them not previously published.⁹¹ In this context, attention should be drawn to one of these papers that deals with the activities of a Venetian firm in Aleppo in the years 1579-81. Elaborating data in a Ms. of the Venetians State Archives and also the reports of the Venetian consuls, the author sheds bright light on the general trend of Levantine trade in the second half of the XVIth century. The Venetians still held first place among the European merchants in Northern Syria and especially in Aleppo, where the Persian caravans arrived. But the spices were no longer of the importance they had been in earlier periods of East-West trade in the Levant. Instead of concentrating on the spice trade, the Venetian merchants acquired great quantities of silk and hides, even investing the great amount of two million ducats a years. On the other hand, according to the author, the methods of trade had not changed from the preceding century. The profits had decreased, as they were conditioned by the transactions on the new world markets, viz. Lisbon and Antwerp. The role of Venice in international trade after the discovery of the sea route to India is dealt with in a paper by H. Kellenbenz (originally a lecture at a congress in Venice).⁹² The author dwells on the factor that facilitated the continuation of Venice's Levant trade. The Turks, the new rulers of the Near East, did not impede Venetian trade and even reduced the imposts. Damascus was well supplied with Indian commodities and since the conquest of Iraq by the Ottomans in 1534-35 the commercial importance of Aleppo was very much enhanced. Indian spices were transported on the Euphrates to Northern Syria. From the 1530's the Red Sea again became a major artery of the trade with India. Commercial activities on the Istanbul-Venice axis were intense and Dutch and other foreign merchants, such as the English residing in Venice, engaged in many transactions. Also, Portuguese marrans settled in the town and carried on

⁹⁰ Cf. my paper *The volume of medieval spice trade*, JEEH IX (1980), p. 753 ff.

⁹¹ *Mercanti, navi, monete nel Cinquecento veneziano*, Bologna 1981.

⁹² *Venedig als internationales Zentrum und die Expansion de Handels im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert*, (in) "Venezia, centro di mediazione tra Oriente e Occidente" (Atti del II Convegno int. di storia della civiltà veneziana, Venice 1973) (Florence 1977) I, pp. 281-305.

trade in Indian articles. On the other hand, Venice still received the silver of Tyrol and the copper of Slovakia. So at the end of the XVIth century and the beginning of the XVIIth century, Venice had succeeded in incorporating itself very well into the new network of European trade. But its role was passive. It was a base for West-European merchants.

The commercial exchanges of Eastern Europe with the Levant in the XVIth century are the subject of a paper of M. Malowist.⁹³ It concentrates on asking where Poland acquired spices in the period of her great expansion. The author shows that not only spices but also many industrial products were imported from Turkey. Some of them were reexported to Russia, the Baltic countries, and Germany, while Poland exported to the Ottoman empire cloth from England, the Low Countries, Germany, and her own, plus metals and furs. The same phenomenon, namely an increase of the commercial exchanges, emerges from the study of documents referring to the foreign trade of Russia in that period. When the Ottomans had conquered Crimea and established their suzerainty on the steppes of the lower Don, Azov (the Turkish Azak, once Tana) became an important centre of trade with Russia.

⁹³ *Le commerce du Levant avec l'Empire de l'est au XVI^e siècle* (in) "Mélanges F. Braudel", I, pp. 349-357.

