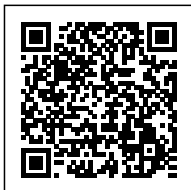


# II. THE EXPANSION AND DIVERSIFICATION OF THE ECONOMY

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The Romano-Germanic area's expansion towards the periphery was at once the cause and effect of multiple complex processes. Bound up with it was the commercial revolution, the intense economic shift that would profoundly alter the traditional ways of life and which began right there in the periphery and later spread with varying degrees of intensity towards the interior. There were significant transformations in production techniques and, above all, profound disturbances to the forms of economic life, which clung on to the modules of a natural economy even as a vigorous exchange economy was emerging.

It was this economy that gradually came to predominate, although the natural economy did not disappear altogether, despite beginning to decline rapidly in some places. The two forms of economic activity competed and provoked confrontation between the social sectors developing them: the old landed aristocracy and the new social groups that began to prosper amid the new opportunities for profit and formed the bourgeoisie. This confrontation rocked the stable foundations of the Christian-feudal order, brought on an intense crisis that manifested in a variety of forms from the eleventh century on and took different forms over the next two centuries before culminating in the fourteenth century in an open challenge to the very principles on which that order rested. The expansion and diversification of the economy had been accompanied by an expansion and diversification of society: whose foundations began to be questioned in even the deepest strata. The radical principles of the traditional order as expressed in the Christian-feudal formula were thus subjected to examination.

The expansion and diversification of society triggered the rapid development of urban life, which responded to the spirit and needs of the situation brought about by the commercial revolution. The cities grew along with the efforts of the new classes as these acquired economic and social significance, but the forms of life that predominated in those cities later helped to encourage, sustain and organise these new classes. Traditional concepts were challenged from within the cities, even though the new rising classes long remained unaware of the true magnitude of their challenge. It was the nascent bourgeoisie acting as a socio-economic class and, above all, as an urban group that sparked the deep social and cultural transformations occurring from the eleventh century onwards.

## **I. NATURAL ECONOMY AND MERCANTILE REVOLUTION**

Various circumstances during the feudal period caused a growing contraction of the economy. The process leading up to this undoubtedly reached back a long way, and its roots might even be

claimed to be concealed in the crumbling of the Roman economic order, whose parts, once separated and evolving in isolation, encountered numerous obstacles in their pursuit of new formulas for equilibrium. To those times dated the stagnation or decline in production techniques and movement of goods – farming methods, irrigation, craft procedures, communication routes, transport – and from then on, the stimuli for production had begun to disappear due to the disruption of consumer markets and the situation of the non-landed classes. But the problem worsened in the Romano-Germanic area from the eighth century onwards, when it ceased to be integrated within the Mediterranean basin. Cities, which had been languishing since the final days of the Empire, saw their decline steepen and, little by little, abandoned the task of driving and ordering economic life, and without that driving force, the commercial network began to break up, each of its roads running a different course depending on its area of influence but with no possibility of developing beyond local limits.

The situation became more critical still with invasions and feudal wars, which destroyed the security essential for commercial traffic. And when the crisis of the central powers allowed the formation of increasingly autonomous local seigneuries, these gradually became economic units driven by the circumstances towards self-sufficiency.

Little by little the system of production and consumption began, in the seigneuries, to acquire the characteristics of natural economy. Faced with the impossibility of obtaining supplies through regular trade, the seigneurie began to secure its own production, the limits of which were also set by the impossibility of selling surpluses at a profit. Production was for consumption and, with rare exceptions, only a portion of goods produced were alienated by barter. Production thus fell in both quality and quantity, and the lack of incentives contributed to a deterioration in production techniques. The circulation of money decreased sharply, and only scant, uneven commercial traffic in a limited number of commodities survived, though even this could not be relied upon. In the absence of a commercial mechanism to offset imbalances in local production, the phenomena of scarcity and hunger became common, and economic stagnation affected all walks of life.

The steady progression of the natural economy influenced conditions of social life, reinforcing a stratification in which the landed and non-landed classes were opposed. The lack of social mobility helped to consolidate the Christian-feudal order, which implied a principle of immutability of social structures. There was, however, appreciable mobility within the aristocracies, whose members grew or declined in power and wealth in step with the changes in land-ownership wrought by feudal wars. But as the situation stabilised – especially from the second half of the tenth century onwards – landowners gradually settled into their estates, and order began to appear to be triumphing. But this was only an appearance. While time helped to stabilise the situation built on the seigneuries – more efficient units than kingdoms – other circumstances worked against the consolidation of this order –

still barely glimpsed but already beginning to be seen as necessary and immutable. The offensive power of invaders had begun to wane, but the path opened up by these invasions now presented a broad prospect of expansion towards their original sources, and this prospect triggered a rollback towards the periphery of the Romano-Germanic area.

It was undoubtedly economic contraction that forced certain groups to seek new horizons outside the system of the traditional seigneuries. On the other hand, ceaseless warfare and the sustained defence of their estates had created an aristocracy willing to venture further afield and undertake more ambitious enterprises. The initial expansion towards the periphery was the work of seigneurs, not of kings, perhaps because the problems of economic contraction compounded by population growth were felt more acutely in the local areas of the seigneuries. But the movement unleashed by the seigneurs had serious consequences for them. The expansion towards the periphery opened up unexpected economic possibilities which, once they began to be exploited, resulted in a rapid and extensive expansion of the economy. The first manifestation of this was the development of international trade, which quickly established the modules for an exchange economy, and the phenomenon was so intense that it amounted to a veritable commercial revolution.

International trade relations were, over time, undoubtedly established in favour of local circumstances even while military confrontations persisted. The sporadic nature of the wars, the internecine feuds that allowed appeals to religious enemies against hostile co-religionists and the simple possibility of profit, which was preferable to the risk of dangerous operations on the enemy front, made it possible for highly active trade flows to be established in the tenth and eleventh centuries that were later regularised as the Christian rollback progressed. Venice began to expand its network at the end of the tenth century to become an outlet for the growing production of the Po Valley. Ibn Hawqal described the cities of southern Italy at the end of the tenth century as follows: 'The territory of Calabria borders on the Lombard principalities, the first of which is Salerno. There is Amalfi, the most prosperous of the Lombard principalities' cities, the most illustrious on account of its conditions and the most abundant and opulent. The territory of Amalfi borders that of Naples, which is a beautiful city but less important than Amalfi. The principal wealth of Naples is flax and the textiles that are made from it. I have seen pieces of this fabric as I have seen in no other parts; and in no other workshop of the world have I seen a craftsman who knows how to make them: they have woven pieces a hundred *dhira* by ten, which sell for some fifty ruba apiece.' It was these Amalfitans, and other Lombards – 'when the holy city was still captive under the Saracen yoke' – who had gone to Syria in the second half of eleventh century 'bearing foreign merchandise to these lands and had succeeded, through tributes and gifts, in earning the benevolence and favour of the Prince', thanks to which they had been able to build the Hospital of Saint John in Jerusalem. And around the same time, Orderic Vitalis pointed out that, in England, 'some places and some fairs filled with French merchandise and merchants' now replacing or competing with the Scandinavian merchants who

had charted the northern sea routes, from cities as remote and active as the ninth-century Tunsberg mentioned by Snorri Sturluson, where ships would arrive from Denmark and Saxony.

The trade of the two great maritime areas that drove the expansion towards the periphery of the Germanic Roman Europe and, with it, the expansion of its economy, organised itself as a vast network, irrespective of political conflicts. The new classes that arose and developed favoured by that activity exploited political contingencies or ignored them altogether, depending on the circumstances, in order to extend and diversify their mercantile and manufacturing activities, and sought ways of ordering their activity through private organisations. Guilds and merchant companies had their own policies aimed at very specific goals and independent of political power. Thanks to such organisation, they succeeded in ordering the world of the exchange economy alongside that of the natural economy, which, for its part, proved unable to withstand the competition.

The collective efforts of mercantile groups achieved major victories. In spite of the practical difficulties, poor communications, the plundering of the seigneurs whose domains they had to cross and the insecurity of the bandit-ravaged roads, mercantile groups were able to link international trade routes with local routes, through which they established a vast distribution network for their wares. Little by little, they managed to persuade kings and seigneurs to ensure them a minimum of security and to bring the taxes they had to pay for right of transit or market dues down to reasonable levels. And as the network expanded and interconnected, the opportunities for trade increased and extended the consumer market, bolstered by the very same classes that were being formed by the economic expansion. As the internal network spread, communication between the major international routes became easier: in the twelfth century, these routes converged on the fairs of Champagne, on neutral territory and away from the political struggles of the day. In Troyes, Bar-sur-Aube, Provins and Lagny, and in Brie – where Salimbene had found so many Lombard and Tuscan merchants – traders from Italy or the North Sea coast exchanged their merchandise – especially Oriental products for Flemish cloths or furs – settled their accounts and then went their separate ways to distribute around their respective trading areas the foreign products they had acquired.

As traffic became more regular, production became more geared to the market. The distribution network ensured the sale of products across a very broad and complex ambit, and the diversity of the market was accompanied by growing diversification in production. Manufactures began to improve in quality due to the specialisation of craftsmen, but mainly to the scale of consumption. It was particularly the cities which concentrated and attracted appreciable hubs of population that assured the absorption of production: these abounded with buyers who had money and a growing appetite to own everyday goods that satisfied their desire for prosperity and, later, for luxury. And the cities also demanded vast amounts of foodstuffs, which logically encouraged agricultural production to enter the market.

This vast commercial development promoted an intense circulation of money. Nevertheless, the early stages of the organisation of the exchange economy were still marked by a shortage of coinage. Precious metals had long been hoarded and only gradually began to trickle back into circulation; yet even then, monetary problems persisted owing to the sheer number of mints and uncertainty surrounding the legal coinage standard. International trade began to attract gold from the Orient and silver stocks grew with the discovery and exploitation of new mines, facilitating sales transactions, which also began to benefit from the development of banking and credit institutions.

The expansion of the economy was, therefore, a mercantile revolution. It did not, however, develop equally in all parts. In fact, a mercantile area formed alongside which an area of natural economy survived, the latter undoubtedly shrinking and the former expanding. The economy diversified, and the two forms of economic activity were in competition throughout the feudal-bourgeois period, causing complex problems when one had to adjust to the other.

The crisis was reflected in the social unrest that occurred in the same period.

## II. TECHNICAL TRANSFORMATIONS

The expansion towards the periphery, alongside the social and economic expansion, also unleashed a new operative attitude which spawned many a technical achievement. In all walks of activity, the contact of men from a traditionalist society marked by economic stagnation with different forms of natural and economic reality and different social situations obliged them to solve the problems of survival posed, by choosing between traditional attitudes and new ones that appeared more effective in the face of the conditions of reality. Economic and social techniques had then to adjust to the demands placed on them by the expansion.

The possibility of exploiting new lands – such as those the Castilians conquered from the Muslims, or the English from the Irish, or those the Germans wrested from the Slavs, as well as others long held but unexploited – created new possibilities for the dispossessed classes of the Romano-Germanic area. *Hospites*, or tenant farmers, established themselves in virgin regions and began to work the land. But in those parts, it became necessary to furnish them with new legal conditions, and the situation made it advisable for these to be granted despite the rift they introduced in the agricultural organisation of the long cultivated regions. The hospites, for their part, applied an energy to working the new land not seen among peasants in traditional situations, along with methods suggested by circumstances, partly traditional while adapted to the new needs for varying scales of technical innovation and refinement. Mediterranean land, for whose cultivation the traditional Roman

techniques that had become routine had sufficed, was very different from the clayier, heavier, wetter, northern land. Much of it was, indeed, covered in forest or swamp, which, before ploughing, first had to be rendered arable with arduous preparatory labour. Moreover, the problem of communications or water distribution meant many other tasks that had to be tackled with resources prompted by the need in question.

Similar problems were posed by new developments in crafts. The abundance of hardwoods in northern Europe had allowed improvements in techniques previously little used, but with them came a new development of the metal-working industries to meet the growing demand for better quality manufactured goods. Iron, copper and brass were worked with increasing care. Textile manufacturing called for intensified sheep-farming and suggested the possibility of acclimatising or developing certain textile fibres. Meanwhile, the growing demand for food products stimulated cheese, wine, meal or oil production. Countless refinements or inventions brought more and better raw materials and meant they could be worked more quickly and thoroughly.

Finally, the living conditions created in newly occupied regions or regions where economic changes brought profound transformations and urgent needs to adapt led to the adoption of new social formulas – some original, others renewed – which soon found legal expression in principles of law that combined custom and the new needs with the support of Roman jurisprudence, which was brought back into circulation.

The new classes – and sometimes even the traditional classes – responded, then, to new situations with a capacity for change that became especially evident in the geographical periphery, but also in the socio-economic periphery that formed around the traditional economic hubs. Guibert de Nogent pointed out the technical inadequacy of the knights who fought in Syria compared to the Romans: 'But since, amongst our men,' he said, 'hardly a single example is to be found of aptitudes, or rather of skills, I shall not say that the deeds were accomplished by the courage of the Franks but by the activity and strength of their faith.' Other social sectors, however, were already witnessing the emergence of the skill which the knights saw in the sailors and mechanically gifted builders with whose assistance they were able to build siege engines or carry out the mining or watercourse diversion works needed to seize the Muslim cities, fortified and defended as they were with technical means far superior to those used by the Christians. That skill reflected a new attitude – a technical and empirical attitude – born of confrontation with new situations that traditional knowledge was powerless to respond to. The empirical, technical attitude was the heritage of the new classes, but as the expansion and diversification of the economy sparked a situation of change, it began to spread as the more effective approach, despite the persistent negative valuation with which it was stigmatised by those who remained attached to the traditional conception of life.

Agriculture called for the application of new techniques not only to develop unworked land but to increase productivity in response to market demands. The new land called for the use of highly resilient tools – axes capable of felling hardwood trees, good quality ploughs and iron ploughshares – and experiments to acclimatise plants had to be carried out on it. To dewater marshlands, drainage or damming works were required, which were also necessary to make the flows needed by watermills available. Although known since antiquity, watermills spread and improved a great deal from the eleventh century on, as demand for flour, wine and oil grew. Very soon windmills began to be built and later became widespread: 'The Germans,' says Ambroise, 'built the first windmill ever made in Syria.'

The work of ploughing and harrowing in heavy soils required traction greater than what was usually available. Towards the end of the tenth century, the rigid collar was invented to hitch horses and fully harness the animal's power, the new method being complemented with shoeing. The procedure could also be used to improve transport. The dray – a sturdy wagon capable of transporting heavy loads – was perfected, while the wheelbarrow was invented to carry lighter loads. Yet, for all this, the waterways – little used by the Romans but later coming into favour – continued to be the preferred method of transporting freight. A ship-building industry thus developed that had ancient roots; from the eleventh century on, however, shipping techniques were greatly improved, in particular the workshops of Venice, Pisa and Genoa. From Genoa came the craftsmen to Galicia, where they built two ships for Archbishop Don Gelmírez at the start of the twelfth century, summoned there because 'there were master ship-builders and sailors of the most seasoned, who yielded nothing in ingenuity to Aeneas's Palinurus,' according to the *Historia Compostelana*. There, in the thirteenth century, the craft were built that Alfonso X of Castile wanted to entrust to his admiral, Hugo Vento. Around that time the ship used by an ambassador of Frederick II's bound for Alexandria attracted attention, 'called the "Half World"' says the *Kitāb al-Siyar*, 'at whose size all the world marvelled, for it was said to carry three hundred sailors not counting passengers, and on which there was an immense cargo of goods: oil, wine, cheese, honey and other produce.' Already, by the twelfth century, the stern-post rudder had been invented, significantly improving the manoeuvrability of sailing ships, and nautical charts and the compass began to be used not long after that.

A considerable body of technical transformations of major importance was applied to constructions of various kinds. 'Some three years on from the year one thousand,' wrote the chronicler Raoul Glaber not long after that, 'basilicas and churches were renovated almost everywhere, especially in Italy and Gaul, though most were still sufficiently beautiful not to require repairs. Yet Christian peoples seemed to vie with each other in magnificence, each erecting churches more elegant than the others. It was as if the whole world had, of a single mind, cast off the rags of its antiquity to don the white raiment of the churches. The faithful, in fact, were not content to rebuild all the episcopal

churches but also embellished all the monasteries dedicated to different saints and even the village chapels.' Noted by contemporaries, this tendency was evident not only in ecclesiastical but civil architecture. Castles, city walls and gates, communal buildings and private dwellings acquired a distinct style during the feudal-bourgeois period and revealed growing architectural expertise. In both Romanesque and, later, Gothic buildings, the vault – be it groin or rib – was employed in ever more daring ways. Pillars, arches, rose windows likewise required extraordinary mastery in stonework, a skill at which the image-makers who carved the tympanums, capitals and statues particularly excelled. The entire construction demanded careful calculation of forces and the use of countless devices to haul and hoist the materials. The planning and direction of architectural works fell to a type of technician so individualised that, at the end of the eleventh century, Orderic Vitalis was able to name an architect, Lanfred, 'whose talent, greater than that of any engineer then in France, merited the highest praise'.

The same techniques, along with other specific ones, were applied in the construction of other works. Trade required the establishment of communications, and it became necessary to build bridges that posed serious problems, so serious that the work of solving them appeared to be beyond human powers. As Guillaume de Nangis says, recounting the events of 1177, 'There came to the city of Avignon a young man named Benito, who claimed to be sent by the Lord to build a bridge over the Rhône. He was mocked, for he had not the wherewithal to carry out the project and the width of the river led people to believe that the task was impossible. Yet, inspired by God, the local people were stirred to do what was necessary for the prompt execution of the work.' Dams, locks – such as those in the port of Bruges – irrigation channels and diversions of water for use in the cities were frequent works carried out with precise knowledge of the hydraulic and construction challenges they posed.

Small solutions to big problems enabled private homes to be renewed, especially those of the new classes, who did not have many people in their service. The invention of the domestic fireplace with external flue allowed a comfortable space to be carved out for family life in cold regions; the glass industry began providing the possibility of making windows to let in light; and the invention of the wax candle, which gave light without smoke, completed the ensemble of technical means to organise the bourgeois home. Magnifying lenses set before the eyes 'which were recently discovered,' according to a document of 1289, 'for the comfort of poor old folk when their sight weakens,' extended the useful life of men of learning.

Glass-making techniques and the development of metal-working not only provided instruments for certain manufacturing processes – such as distillation or weapons production – but also to improve household utensils. Craftsmen emerged, and artists began to differentiate themselves from them. The crossbow required creative ingenuity, and later efficient craftsmen to turn them out in large

numbers. Goldsmiths acquired such reputations that their names were recorded by chroniclers of the day, as were the names of engineers expert in siege engines: engineers like Jocelin de Cornaut, who was, according to Joinville, a *maistresengingnierres* in the army of King Louis IX in Egypt.

The use of the trip-hammer powered by a water-mill, or the invention of the clock, reveal how a special sense for the use of mechanical devices began to be acquired. Experience began to combine with reason in devising systems of forces. In the same way they would combine time and time again in devising an accounting system to keep track of mercantile operations. Similarly, they would work to establish a system of division of labour that would further enhance each operator's production capacity and help increase the profits of producers.

This technical transformation came about in the mercantilised area and helped to underline its differences from the areas subject to natural economy. But the new methods spread quickly because the new technicians – goldsmiths, architects, textile workers, glaziers, siege engineers, blacksmiths, cheese-makers, farmers – were in demand in various parts and travelled frequently from place to place, establishing an intense exchange of ideas and methods. There were, nevertheless, some areas that did not require them, either because they deliberately sought to keep economic change at bay or because they were impervious to the significance of the changes. But the mercantilised area would soon make its superiority felt and bring about a marked economic gap with areas once central that were now becoming marginal.

### III. NEW FORMS OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Economic expansion and technical changes brought new forms of economic activity, the practice of which would affect the system of social relations. Stimulated by growth in demand and the incentive of profit, the new economic style spread rapidly, even in rural areas. There, a tendency began to develop of sending any surplus production to market, both from the villa-managed estates and from land worked by tenants, who were sometimes compelled to do so because the seigneurs began to require payment of taxes owed them in coin. The cities required increased amounts of foodstuffs – grains, vegetables, wine, oil, honey, fruits, cheeses, poultry, eggs, mutton or pork – usually paid in coin at market, but mixed forms of payment persisted, especially in rural areas: three people who jointly and severally waived a right might receive, the first twenty sous and a ham, the second a cow with calf and the third six lambs. The process of agricultural production soon began to be organised with a view to commercialisation.

More important, naturally, were the new forms of activity to emerge and develop in the field of

trade, manufacturing and finance. The mercantile revolution was triggered precisely from the periphery of the Romano-Germanic area, and the first step – the most revolutionary of all – was the rapid development of international trade mounted in border regions and subject to a regime that made it independent of the vicissitudes of political and military struggles. From early on, a commercial network began to be knitted, refined and adjusted to its own needs and regardless of the political situations created, yet still capable of exerting influence over these situations and of helping to modifying them if it suited the interests that this network served. Anglo-Saxon merchants were trading in the Lombard kingdom in the tenth century, and routes of expansion extended both from England northwards and from Venice south-eastwards. Though once occasional, these routes came to be plied with increasing regularity. All mercantile traffic strove to order itself within and in relation to this network. If the merchant who ventured to foreign climes alien to his religion and customs represented a new type of adventurer or man of commerce, the one who sought out and established contacts between the great sea-routes in order to concentrate the products of trade and distribute them throughout the markets likewise exemplified a new conception of economic life. Fairs made the supply of products that once only appeared sporadically inland a regular sight, and the problems of administrative, political, economic and financial organisation they entailed revealed a substantial change how commercial activity was understood. The forms of small-scale commerce practised by itinerant merchants or those established in urban stalls were likewise inevitably altered.

In the field of large-scale commerce, certain goods achieved rapid, widespread development. More than any other, the textile trade evolved rapidly towards increasingly complex forms, with substantial capital investments and projections about economic relations, not just amongst the various Christian countries but amongst them and the Muslim and Byzantine worlds; and not just in the line of woollen fabrics but in silks. Of considerable importance were the trade in metals and weapons, timber for construction and especially the ship-building industry, slaves, wine, salt, oil, wax, furs; and the list could be go on in light of detailed testimonies that reveal the breadth of international trade.

To undertake such large-scale operations, increasing volumes of capital were required, which could only be secured by pooling individual contributions. This led to the emergence of new forms of economic activity around companies or partnerships formed to finance commercial ventures. Sometimes they were companies made up of several different partners who contributed different sums and entrusted one of their number with the execution of commercial operations. Sometimes they were partnerships in which one partner put up the money and another the commercial activity: the traditional *commenda*. In both cases, these were temporary contracts intended for specific operations. But alongside these, there arose the stable partnership born of the family company (*fraternacompania*), which pooled different capital sources for the permanent development of international trade on a vast scale. This required agents in different locations who were directly

invested in the success of the operations to ensure the effectiveness of the decisions they took independently. Powerful thanks to their pooled capital and the organisation they controlled, the companies – temporary or permanent – transformed the face of economic activity.

Growing demand for manufactured goods was met with ever increasing supply, which included not only the flow of foreign products circulated throughout the mercantilised area by commerce but the products that began to be manufactured within its boundaries. Crafts progressed fairly quickly, as techniques improved, but primarily because the conditions of production changed. The craftsman who perfected his trade but continued to acquire raw materials and work from home to sell to individual buyers began to experience competition from the more or less complex business organisation set up by anyone investing capital to purchase raw materials and contract craftsmen that would increase output. The collective workshop gave craft activity a new face. Masters and journeymen grouped together in guilds, though only masters enjoyed full rights, and through the guilds production was regulated, prices fixed and the monopoly maintained for the benefit of the group. Only on the fringes of these organisations – albeit quite frequently – did foreign craftsmen appear in certain cities or for certain jobs, whose techniques influenced the transformation of production.

Increasingly large capital sums began to circulate for both the development of commercial activity and of manufacturing, lending a new character to financial organisation. This capital came from different sources: some of it from savings which craftsmen and merchants had managed to set aside and some of it from rents on land, whose seigneurs began to put them to work in the marketplace to finance commercial enterprises. Vigorous exchange with the Muslim world diverted gold to the West, of which William of Tyre said there was in 'Egypt and in neighbouring lands an incalculable quantity of the highest quality and utmost purity.' And all that mass of capital began to be the subject of special traffic, stemming partly from the need to solve the problems created by the wide variety of coins and the uncertainty of their values and partly from the desire to establish a payment mechanism to prevent excessive transport of precious metals. The moneychanger solved equivalence problems and provided the necessary coin to make transactions. His functions, however, began to diversify as he began to take on other commissions, especially the receipt of certain sums in one place to be paid in another. The collection of 'Peter's Pence' or tithe for the Crusades put the Church at the heart of this traffic, from which, the Spini, bankers to the Pope, and others profited. The possession of large sums for extended periods of time allowed bankers to perform credit operations. 'Cahorsini', Lombards or Jews passed were reputed to be the most assiduously devoted to credit operations, but many others – and even convents – conducted such operations, prompting Saint Bernard to say that 'in lands where there are no Jews, one experiences the pain of finding Christians who surpass the Jews themselves at usurious lending.' And alongside private individuals, military orders – the Knights Templar, the Teutonic Knights – developed a wide-

ranging credit policy of which kings in particular availed themselves.

The new forms of economic life spread the use of money, which made a powerful impact on customs, ways of life, habits and economic ideas. Within the broader picture of the crisis described by Jacques de Vitry at the start of the thirteenth century, he draws particular attention to the rise of usury and its repercussions, in which this first impact of the money economy is clear to see. 'Knights,' he said, 'lost their assets and their vaster estates; the poor were dispossessed.' On the subject of moneylenders, he later added the following: 'That breed of men, the vilest and most reprehensible, had so multiplied in all parts that they had flooded not only the cities but the countryside as well.' 'Others,' he says further on, 'sold their wares at high prices on the pretext of delaying the date of payment, or made advances on the period of payment and bought merchandise for paltry prices to be delivered later.' Speaking of the seigneurs, he claims that, 'given to prodigality and luxury, they incurred much wanton expense for their tournaments and pompous worldly vanities, and ran up debts with usurers, while comedians and jesters, vagrant parasites and buffoons, court dogs and sycophants devoured their fortunes and fleeced them blind.'

It was this same impact which sparked a growing demand for coin and a series of experiments on the conditions of its circulation. The abundance of minters allowed each one to conceive the function of coin in their own ways, initially spawning the naïve hope of turning a profit from counterfeiting or flouting the law. At the start of the twelfth century, the phenomenon was widespread – in England, Normandy, France, Castile. But experience gradually revealed the shortcomings of this monetary policy, and from the mid-thirteenth century on, the cities shouldering the highest economic burden in Italy began to mint genuine gold coins, without this being an obstacle to relapse into the kind of bad practices which earned Philip the Fair Dante's apostrophe.

Finally, it was again this impact which prompted kings and seigneurs to commute the rights they held or the taxes they were due into money: twenty-one pounds and a palfrey in exchange for the rights a knight held over some land or one sixth of an aureus for the tithes and liabilities owed to a bishop by Jews. The author of the *Dialogus de Scaccario* noted the circumstances that led to this change in the days of Henry II of England: 'Our forefathers have told us that in the original constitution, after the Conquest, the king received no gold or silver from the lands of the Crown but only victuals to meet the daily needs of the royal household; and officials were expected to know how much was to be received from each land. But for knights' service pay and rewards, as well as other necessaries, coin was collected from the profits of the king's jurisdiction or from voluntary payments for privileges or from towns and villages whose main activity was not agriculture. This system lasted throughout the reign of William I and until the time of his son Henry; I myself have known persons withal who had seen the foodstuffs that were brought to court from the Crown lands at the appointed times; and the officials of the king's household knew exactly what wheat from

which county or what different kinds of meat or what other necessaries were to be delivered. But while payment for each kind of product was made in corresponding measure, the officials credited the sheriff in monetary terms. For a quantity of wheat sufficient to bake bread for a hundred persons, they credited one shilling; for a head of cattle, one shilling; for a ram or a sheep, fourpence; for fodder for twenty horses, fourpence. But as time went on, when King Henry was engaged in suppressing an armed rebellion somewhere on the other side of the sea, the need for minted coin to carry out his purpose became urgent. At the same time, a throng of distressed peasants hounded the court – or, more annoyingly, the king himself when he was on the road – displaying their ploughshares as a sign of the agricultural depression; for they were toiling under the considerable burden of having to carry foodstuffs from their own homes to all corners of England. The king heard their complaints with sympathy and, after consulting his council, sent commissioners throughout the kingdom whom he deemed especially wise and prudent. They toured the Crown lands and saw for themselves, and made an estimate of the quantity of foodstuffs paid by each of them, and expressed the value in terms of coin.'

The use of money undoubtedly developed a new system of valuation. The new wealth bore challenges voiced by the traditional forms of life but, at the level of reality, quickly won great prestige. Whether willingly or unwillingly, the growing power of money was coming to be acknowledged, so much so that the poet Marcabru could say of the imperial election of Lothair II: 'Gallantry is crumbling, and Baseness is fortifying itself and wishes not to admit Joy within its walls. I do not think that either Right or Reason shall stand firm for very long once a wretch becomes emperor for money.' Political power – kings and seigneurs – which at first plundered the new mercantile classes, soon realised it should not only refrain from disrupting their commercial, manufacturing and financial activities, but that it stood to gain much from protecting and encouraging them. Numerous royal and seigneurial provisions steadily helped to secure peace in the marketplace and the free exercise of trade to the extent that, amidst a military truce, merchants were exempt from the established transit prohibitions and 'may come and go according to the legitimate ways of ancient times.' Nevertheless, political power did at times take action against traders, but this was usually against one sector and in support of another: in other words, it exercised a certain mercantile policy that would soon tighten the bonds between political power and the new wealth. These bonds helped to enhance the social significance of the new classes, whose activity was expanding and bringing about a steady diversification of the various groups within it.

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## Notes

- △ 1. Ibn Hawqal, *Kitâb al masâli*, Amari, *Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula*, I, 24 ff.
- △ 2. Jacques de Vitry, *Historia Orientalis*, I.
- △ 3. Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV, yr. 1070.
- △ 4. Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla: Harald the Fairhaired*, XIV.
- △ 5. Salimbene di Adam, *Cronica*, I, 303.
- △ 6. Guibert de Nogent, *Gesta Dei per Francos*, VII; see Bertrand Gille, *Les developpements technologiques en Europe de 1100 à 1400*, in *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale* III (i), 1956.
- △ 7. Ambroise, *L'Estoire de la guerre sainte*, l. 3227 ff.
- △ 8. *Historia Compostelana*, I, 103.
- △ 9. Roberto Sabatino López, *Alfonso X y el primer almirante genovés de Castilla*, in *Cuadernos de Historia de España*, XIV, 1950.
- △ 10. *Kitâbsîar*, in Michele Amari, *Biblioteca arabo-sicula*, I, 522–3.
- △ 11. Raoul Glaber, *Histoires*, III, iv.
- △ 12. Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VIII, yr. 1096.
- △ 13. Guillaume de Nangis, *Chronicon*, yr. 1177.
- △ 14. Cf. Aldo Mieli, *Panorama general de historia de la ciencia*, II, 280.

- △ 15. Joinville, *Histoire de Saint Louis*, XLI.
- △ 16. Georges Duby, *Recueil des pancartes de l'Abbaye de la Ferte-sur-Grosne*, document no.16.
- △ 17. Roberto Sabatino López, *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World*, document no. 20.
- △ 18. Roberto Sabatino López, *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World*, document no. 56.
- △ 19. Roberto Sabatino López, *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World*, documents nos. 54, 82–89, 91 and 92; Armando Saponi, *Le compagnie mercantili toscane del duecento e dei primi del trecento*, en *Studi di storia economica medievale*, 327 ff.
- △ 20. R.S. Lopez, *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World*, document no. 33; cf. Armando Saponi, 'La funzione economica della nobiltà', in *Studi di storia economica medievale*, 705–723.
- △ 21. Guillaume de Tyr, *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*, XXI, yr. 1174.
- △ 22. Saint Bernard, *Epistolae*, CCCLXIII, 7.
- △ 23. Jacques de Vitry, *Historia Orientalis*, II, i–ii.
- △ 24. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, yrs. 1124 and 1125; Guillaume de Jumièges, *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, VIII, xxiii; Guibert de Nogent, *De vita sua*, III, viii; *Historia Compostelana*, I, 33.
- △ 25. Salimbene de Adam, *Cronica*, I, 391; Giovanni Villani, *Cronica*, VI, liii; cf. Alfred Doren, *Storia economica dell'Italia nel medioevo*, 411 ff.
- △ 26. Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia*, 'Paradiso', XIX, l. 118 ff.; Mattaeus Parisiensis, *Chronica Majora*, yr. 1248.
- △ 27. Georges Duby, *Recueil des pancartes de l'abbaye de la Ferté-sur-Grosne*, document no. 255.
- △ 28. Eduardo de Hinojosa, *Documentos para la historia de las instituciones de León y de Castilla*, document no. LXXII.

△ 29. Richard, son of Nigel, *Dialogus de Scaccario*, Charles Johnson (Ed.), 40–41.

△ 30. Marcabru, 'Aujatz chan com enans'e meillura', in Martí de Riquer i Morera, *La lírica de los trovadores*, 52.

△ 31. Rigord, *Chronique*, yr. 1206.

